Developing a Framework to enhance the Operation of Quality Assurance in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education: Educational Management and E-Management Perspectives

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Abstract

This research aimed to develop a framework to enhance the operation of quality assurance in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions, through exploring stakeholders' perspectives, considering educational management and the potential of e-management.

In looking to generate an insight into the reality of QA practice towards developing a heuristic enhancement framework, a case study methodology consisting of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods was employed. In the initial stage, a scoping study was employed to explore the main issues surrounding the operation of QA by conducting 10 interviews with elite stockholders. For the main study, interviews, focus groups and a questionnaire were employed to gather data simultaneously. There were 23 participants in interviews, 9 in focus groups and 301 responders to a questionnaire. Qualitative data were analysed based on thematic analysis, descriptive statistics were applied to the quantitative data making use of the SPSS statistical package. Data were analysed separately and then integrated and compared in the process of interpretation of the overall results.

This case study found that participants from all levels of the institution agreed that QA requirements are a primary part of academic commitments. The results showed that stakeholders are willing to engage in the QA operations at an individual level. However, not all faculty members accepted the changes resulting from a systematic QA approach. There are those who support and engage effectively and those who reject the idea because of uncertainty or lack of a clear understanding of QA. This study has identified that the largest group of stakeholders actively participating in QA operations is made up of QA staff, followed by administrative and faculty staff. In addition, the study found that stakeholders with experience in QA participate significantly more than others. The study noticed a disparity between the engagement of stakeholders at older long established colleges and new ones. Several factors driving this trend emerged, such as the work environment, availability of support from senior management, availability of human and financial support, and the extent of understanding of QAP. The study discovered a wide range of evidence indicating significant difficulties in relation to the participation of stakeholders in the QA operations, due to a number of common challenges; such as management issues, individual attitudes, staff development, incentives and external factors. The study indicated that the relationship between QA operation and e-management in the university is limited or unclear. In terms of the positive perception of participants toward the potential of e-management in the operation of QA, the results indicated that e-

management could provide essential solutions to a number of challenges confronting stakeholders in QA operations. Five potential areas in which e-management could help in QA operations were outlined: administration, operation, information management, control and evaluation and support. However, the study revealed several potential challenges that could confront higher education institutions in taking full advantage of e-management in the operation of QA, namely, management aspects, stakeholders, and technical issues.

The study has proposed a heuristic framework to enhance the operation of QA and to tackle the issues that arose over the course of the research. The framework's development is grounded in the literature across three disciplines (Change, QA and e-management), and in the perspectives of stakeholders involved in the actual operation of QA. This framework considers seven main areas: leadership, stakeholders, QAP, staff development, rewards and incentives, e-management and external factors. The study proposes a framework with the intention of providing guidance and insight for higher education policy and decision makers, academic leaders in Saudi HEIs, and for HEIs throughout the region.

Dedication

To my beloved parents, whose love and prayer have sustained me throughout my life, and who gave me great encouragement to be the best I can be, and to have high expectations of myself. Despite the distance, I feel they are always with me, strengthening and guiding me.

To the love of my life, my wife, my sons, and my daughter. Their strength and support helped me struggle through the most difficult and busy of times. Without their patience, this study would not have been completed.

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I would like to acknowledge the government of Saudi Arabia for the financial support throughout my years of study. In addition, I would like to thank the Case Study University for granting access to their sectors to collect the required data. I would also like to thank all the staff in the University for their generous cooperation.

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I would like to express my sincere thanks to all my friends and colleagues in the UK for the wonderful collaboration we have worked on together, and I wish them all the best.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Name: Mossab Saud Alholiby

Signature: 

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List of Abbreviations

HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HE	Higher Education
QA	Quality Assurance
QAP	Quality Assurance Process
QAPs	Quality Assurance Procedures
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information Communication Technology
KSA	The kingdom of Saudi Arabia
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
E-system	Electronic System
E-services	Electronic services
E-management	Electronic Management
E-application	Electronic Application
EMQAP	Electronic Management for Quality Assurance Process
TQM	Total Quality Management

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Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

1.1 Introduction

In recent decades, at international, regional and local levels, the academic arena has witnessed an unprecedented race towards implementing quality assurance (QA) systems and processes into higher education (HE) including a growing requirement for academic accreditation (Abdul-Jabbar, 2012). Many international initiatives have been established around QA, along with partnerships at the national level, designed to enable the productive implementation and operation of QA. Although the mechanisms and ideas are not new, there is a growing awareness of the importance of the need to adjust upwards the quality of academic process and the outcomes of HE (Martin and Stella, 2007). Thus, QA is now perceived as a fundamental phenomenon in higher education institutions (HEIs); it is driving decisive changes in educational administration policies, and the accountability procedures in academia.

Generally, developing countries have embarked on continuing reforms and rapid expansion or growth in the HE sector and thus confront several challenges. At the system level, the challenge is to achieve a balance between the needs of expanding HEIs and ensuring that high quality education is provided. At the institutional level, the challenge is to find or develop new, accurate and scientific ways of examining, measuring and ensuring the quality of outputs (San and Kong, 2012). Developing countries also confront significant challenges in establishing effective QA mechanisms, due to insufficient financial resources and technically qualified staff (Lim, 1999, Sanyal and Martin, 2007).

Over the past decade, higher education in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has witnessed a remarkable expansion due to the continued support of the government, promoting the establishment of academic institutions in various disciplines. Consequently, the HE sector has achieved significant growth in terms of quantity, infrastructure construction, numbers of enrolled students, and numbers of faculty members. This has been accompanied by a significant increase in spending on academic institutions (Zaher, 2007, I.M., 2012). When the Saudi government established the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) in 2004, it was seen as promoting a new form of HE. The core message of the NCAAA has been that its role is supporting the improvement of the quality of HEIs through a system and procedures that are objective and

transparent, in order to win the trust of the local community and the world (NCAAA, 2017). Quality assurance is now considered a critical element at educational institutions. It has been recognized and accepted as a significant factor in shaping institutional reputation. However, although huge effort, attention and financial support has been invested to achieve reasonable QA goals in Saudi HE over the last decade, only five governmental universities have succeeded and obtained institutional accreditation (NCAAA, 2016).

It seems that the process of change is complex and difficult, and becomes more arduous when changes are applied at institutional level; partly because of the privacy of their communities, and because of the human response of actors, who may see these changes as a threat to their stability and authority. Therefore, change emerges a difficult task needing an appropriate environment, appropriate strategies, integrated capabilities, and above all, effective leadership to move to wider horizons, achieve institutional objectives, and to meet the wishes of stakeholders; this leadership is also vital in ensuring a smooth transition process amid crashing waves of resistance (Otaibi, 2009).

Due to the emergence of powerful digital and electronic technology, countries have been quick to apply the benefit of this technology in many areas, including management. Saudi Arabia, for example, has made great strides in the application of e-management in a number of government and private institutions, to confront the development challenges inherent in achieving scientific, social and economic breakthroughs. E-management represents a new trend in contemporary management. Active investment in modern techniques of advanced information and communication systems are ubiquitous in the development of modern organisations, whether business or civic, and are transforming them into electronic organisations, which use the internet to accomplish tasks, such as administrative planning and organisation, guidance and control, quality, production, financing and investment, etc. (Ghoneim, 2004). Higher education is increasingly geared towards administrative organisation, based on the use of advanced information technology and accurate, objective, flexible modern methods, connecting systems and all levels of management. The researcher recognised the need to explore the potential of e-management in the development of QA, in order to increase stakeholders' commitment to e-management, which still plays a minor role in QA operation in HEIs, and to identify key advantages that might drive best practice in the QA operation.

To understand the contemporary practice of QA in Saudi HEIs, this study will attempt to explore the perspectives of different types of stakeholders at one of the largest universities in KSA, in order to investigate the extent of stakeholders' engagement with QA operations, the challenges that confront them and the potential of e-management in supporting the management of QAP. The study will utilise social scientific literature across three disciplines: change, QA and e-management; it will follow a case study methodology that consists of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to explore a comprehensive picture of the reality of QA practice. Through systematic analysis, the research aims to provide stakeholders and educational policy and decisions makers and those interested in this field, with a heuristic framework to enhance the operation of QA in developing countries, particularly in KSA.

This research considers QA in HE and the potential of e-management in relation to QA operations. Quality assurance implementation represents a major change in HEIs as it has a significant impact on many central components and needs a clear strategic vision and wide stakeholders' involvement to succeed. Academic staff are understood as playing a core role in the assurance and enhancement of educational quality within HEIs. In addition, the support and commitment of academic staff towards QA mechanisms and procedures tends to be considered a main factor in the success of operations (Rosa, 2014). As the literature review will show, few researchers have explored the issues considered in this research, particularly stakeholders' perceptions. Therefore, there exists a need for the kind of insights produced in this research, especially in KSA.

1.2 The Motivation for and Significance of the Study

By virtue of his work at a Saudi HEIs, the researcher has noted a sense of disaffection with the development of QA operation in HE. This dissatisfaction stems from multiple sources: the approach to change and introduction of a new QA system, the mechanisms followed in QA operations, the nature of stakeholders' engagement, the lack of a supportive e-management system for QA and the need for some kind of framework for QA operation and enhancement, looking to understand and overcome the challenges causing delays in QA development.

This study has significance for the following reasons:

1. This study is consistent with the Saudi government's vision 2030, which focuses on developing and restructuring government sectors, continuously and with flexibility, unifying efforts, streamlining procedures and enabling all sectors to deliver on their mandates, to promote accountability, and to show adaptability in the face of new challenges.

2. The study looks at the QA operation in a University, an institution that has a profound impact on the community and plays an important role in the lives of individuals, in helping to shape their futures and the future of society.

3. This study seeks to recognise the extent of stakeholders' engagement in QA operations in HE, in one of the largest developing countries in the world. It also seeks to identify the major challenges confronting stakeholders' engagement, which may impede the effective operation of QAP.

4. The study identifies the most appropriate mechanisms and strategies to overcome the challenges involved in the operation of QA. This will help HEIs to move confidently and safely towards the development of QA, especially in KSA.

5. This study explores stakeholders' perspectives toward the potential of e-management in QA operation and the expected challenges involved, while also identifying appropriate ways to overcome them. It has, therefore, a forward-looking vision that will support HEIs to move confidently and smoothly towards the development of educational management technology in all their different levels.

6. The study develops a heuristic framework to enhance QA operation in HEIs.

7. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no studies have so far been conducted in KSA on stakeholders' perspectives towards engagement in the operation of QA, nor has previous work anywhere covered stakeholders' perspectives toward the potential of e-management in QA operations.

8. The researcher hopes that this study encourages the provision of increased support for and interest in the application of e-management in universities, both in KSA and globally, in order to achieve the desired objectives of QA.

9. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will support the policy and decision makers in Saudi Arabian HE when choosing appropriate methods of managing change.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is the development of a framework to enhance the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia's HEIs, giving consideration to educational management, the potential of e-management and stakeholders' perspectives.

This overall aim would be achieved by fulfilment of the following objectives:

1. Reviewing the literature about development and change in HE, along with leading theories and models.
2. Reviewing the literature about QA in order to comprehend the underlying philosophy of QA practice in HE, its theories and development and its frameworks and models.
3. Reviewing the literature about e-management in HE, in order to understand its development and models, and its potential contribution to enhancing the operation of QAP.
4. Exploring stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QAP.
5. Identifying the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of QAP.
6. Exploring stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management tools in the operation of QAP.
7. The synthesis of the six aims above into a framework that has a heuristic value to practitioners responsible for QA in Saudi Arabia's HEIs.

1.4 Research Questions

Drawing on literature from across educational management and e-management, together with an understanding of stakeholders' perspectives: **What framework can be proposed to enhance the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia's HEIs?**

Subsidiary questions:

1. What is the global context of HEIs, and how have contemporary trends influenced the recent development of Saudi Arabia's HEIs?
2. How has QA developed in HE transnationally, and in Saudi Arabia's HEIs?

3. What is the significance of e-management in HEIs, and what can be concluded from the literature on e-management's potential contribution to enhancing the operation of QAP?
4. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?
5. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?
6. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

1.5 Novelty and Contribution of the Study

This study is novel in terms of its literature review, methodology, discussions, findings, and usefulness. It contributes to filling the notable gaps in our knowledge towards progressing QA as a project of change in HEIs, while also providing hitherto unavailable information in regard to the potential of e-management in QA. To the researcher's knowledge, virtually no research exploring these three major areas (change, QA, e-management) together has been undertaken in KSA, or globally. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge by generating a foundation for further research in QA operation and the potential of e-management, especially in developing countries.

The focus of this research is distinct and its findings have been reached, within the limitations of a study of this scale, by a comprehensive, accurate and detailed research methodology, consisting of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods collecting in-depth datasets from large samples, and analysing them systemically in order to generalize and make recommendations. The methodology of this study could be used to conduct further research in this area, either in other Saudi HEIs, or in other countries around the world; particularly in developing countries, which are marked by similar challenges.

Most of the QA frameworks and models already in existence have been constructed in developed countries, which might or might not be appropriate for use in developing countries in general, and specifically in Arab countries, in terms of cultural and political differences. In relation to this, the main contribution of this study is that it develops a heuristic framework for education policy and decision makers, and academic leaders in HE

adopting QA systems towards enhancing the level of performance in their institution, including the application of educational management and e-management perspectives. The potential usefulness of the framework stems from the fact that it is grounded in stakeholders' perspectives and its ability to draw attention to the challenges and drawbacks in QA systems. This could help ensure that key factors and issues are highlighted within change processes and that effective leadership and management can be provided. Thus, the study has relevance for academic leaders in the case study university, other Saudi HEIs and HEIs throughout the region.

1.6 Research Limitations

Although the study has been carefully conducted, there were some unavoidable limitations. First of all, because of time constraints, this study involved only one of the largest Saudi HEIs. The findings of this research are therefore limited to this context, but may be generalisable to other contexts with similar conditions. If a future study was possible it would ideally extend over a longer period of time and involve more than one university; in order to compare results and establish a broader picture about QA operations in Saudi HE. Second, despite the approval of the case study university to conduct this research, the researcher has decided to conceal the name of the university in response to the belief that some of the data collected from participants was sensitive. This is to keep the university and its employees free of any repercussions that may harm their reputation, and to keep the researcher free of any kind of social pressure relating to this data.

Third, for cultural reasons, access to a sufficient number of female stakeholders to participate in both interviews and focus group sessions was not easy to arrange, therefore, fewer females participated in these sessions than males. Fourth, the study explored the perspectives of stakeholders who have roles in managing and operating the QA, therefore, students' perspectives were not included.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is presented over ten chapters. Following the introduction, chapter two presents a brief overview of the research context, the political, geographical and ecumenical information on the KSA, together with a description of the growing technological infrastructure in the nation’s strategic planning. It presents an overview of education policy

with a focus of HE. Briefly, it discusses the development of QA in Saudi HE and the challenges of QA culture.

Chapter three reviews the existing literature on changes within HE. It discusses various issues that comprise the drivers and concepts of change, its forces and challenges. It reviews approaches to change, its models and strategies. It also discusses the role of leadership and the essentials of successful change.

Chapter four reviews the existing literature on QA in HE. It provides a general overview of quality and an in-depth discussion of quality and QA in the context of HE. It offers a consideration of QA standards and mechanisms, together with a discussion of stakeholders' engagement in QA operations. Further, it presents an overview of QA development in HE in Arab Gulf States. In addition, it discusses the challenges of QA operation and keys to successful operations.

Chapter five reviews the existing literature on e-management and QA. It provides an overview of e-management concepts and the development of ICT in HE, focusing on Saudi HE. It examines the potential of e-management in QA operations, along with potential challenges and possible solutions.

Chapter six outlines the research design and methodology. It provides an overview of the case study university, highlights the results of the scoping study and its main findings, and offers an in-depth discussion of the main research procedures, comprising the research population, the construction and application of instruments, the issues associated with various methods of analysis, validity and reliability, and research ethics.

Chapter seven explains the method of qualitative dataset analysis used in the study and its stages. It presents the qualitative data results derived from the semi-structured interviews, focus groups and open-ended questions within the questionnaire.

Chapter eight explains the type of quantitative dataset analysis used in the study and the test used to examine the differences in stakeholders' perceptions. It presents quantitative data results based on the questionnaire conducted with a large sample of stakeholders.

Chapter nine provides an in-depth discussion of the results derived from both qualitative and quantitative datasets. It sets out the proposed framework to enhance the development of QA in Saudi Arabia's HE.

Finally, chapter ten presents the major findings of the operational research questions. It outlines recommendations from the study and the scope for further research.

Chapter 2: Research Context: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a brief historical background about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in order to describe the environment and the context in which the research is located. This chapter reviews, at the outset, the nature of the regime in the Kingdom, geographic information, current trends in the economy and in information technology, as well as the government's HE objectives in the development plan. This chapter also highlights the education policy and philosophy, the development of HE and the motives for attention to quality and academic accreditation.

2.2 Ruling System

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an Islamic monarchy in which Islam is the official religion. It was founded in 1902 and unified in 1932. In support of the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Messenger Mohammad (peace be upon him), citizens give a pledge of allegiance – known as “Bay'a" – to the King, professing loyalty in times of hardship or ease. Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of Allah and the Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH), which are the ultimate sources of reference for the laws of the state. Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on justice, Shura (consultation) and equality, according to Islamic Sharia (Council, 2015).

2.3 Geographic Information

Location

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located in the southwest corner of Asia, at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. It is surrounded by the Red Sea to the west, by Yemen and Oman on the south, the Arabian Gulf and the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to the east, and Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait to the north. Saudi Arabia occupies four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, with an area of about 2 million square kilometres. Riyadh is the capital of the Kingdom. The cities of Mecca and Medina are considered holy for Muslims around the world: they are visited by millions of Muslims each year. In addition, all Muslims face the Grand Mosque in Mecca five times a day to pray (C.D.S.I, 2015).

Climate

Saudi Arabia climate varies from one region to another according to topography. Overall, the climate of the Kingdom is continental hot in summer, cold in winter, with rainfall in the winter. The climate on the western highlands and south-western is somewhat moderate, with relatively heavy rain (C.D.S.I, 2015).

Figure 2. 1 Map of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (CIA, 2013)

Population

In 2010 the population of KSA was 27,136,977. Saudis constituted 68.9% of the population (18,707,576). The population distributed by gender, in 2010, composed : 50.9% males and 49.1% females. The non-Saudi population, in 2015, was that of 8,429,401 which represented 31.1% of the population (C.D.S.I, 2015).

2.4 Economy

Saudi Arabia is making great efforts to reach a diversified economic base and to improve the investment environment. The government, therefore, has taken serious steps for economic reform. The Kingdom has great advantages in a number of strategic sectors in the region and in the world. It occupies the first place in the world in terms of low energy prices. The Kingdom is the largest free economic market in the Middle East, holding 25% of the total Arab gross national product. In addition, KSA is one of the biggest producers of oil (which was discovered in the country in 1936), and it has the largest oil reserves in the world. The geographical location of the Kingdom provides it with easy access to the markets of Europe, Asia and Africa. To take advantage of this geographical location, KSA has identified three strategic objectives: (1) to focus on the Kingdom as a global energy capital (2) to take advantage of its geographical location in the heart of the Middle East, with a focus on the transport and logistics sectors, and (3) to focus on knowledge-based industries, such as health care, life sciences, education and information technology (SAUDI, 2015b).

2.5 Development of Information and Communication Technology

It is believed that the information and communication technology (ICT) sector is one of the most important influences on the development of all segments of the society in that it supports the national economy. This sector has received considerable attention from the government of the Kingdom in order to achieve maximum utilisation of its potential to serve the citizens and to facilitate their activities. The government also aims, through the adoption of electronic transactions in various fields, to increase the effectiveness of performance in governmental organisations and the business sector. This will raise the efficiency of the national economy and create an investment environment based on clear bases and high transparency (CITC, 2015).

In this regard, the government has launched a large number of initiatives to shift to electronic transactions in all sectors. The YESSER programme is one of the most important e-transformation initiatives in the Kingdom. The implementation of the first plan (2006–2010) of the programme has been accomplished. The aim of this plan was that by the end of 2010 everyone in the Kingdom would be able to enjoy – anywhere and at any time – world-class government services offered in a seamless, user friendly and secure way by utilising a variety of electronic means. Currently, the second plan (2012–2016) is being implemented. This is working in four strategic areas (YESSER, 2015):

1. Rehabilitation of human resources in sustainable e-government transactions.
2. Enhancing the experience of citizens and their responses in their dealings with government agencies.
3. The development of a culture of collaboration and innovation.
4. Increasing the efficiency of services provided by government agencies.

2.6 The Development Plan

Since 1970 the Kingdom has implemented nine five-year development plans. This has involved a distinct experience in programming development projects to achieve a large number of goals and aspirations in response to the requirements of the local and global changes.

In the area of social development, the Tenth Development Plan, for 2015 to 2019, aims to develop human resources, by upgrading their productivity and expanding their options in acquiring knowledge, skills and experience by HE, through the following channels (M.E.P, 2015, pp. 13-14):

1. Ensuring consistency between education outputs and the requirements of the labour market.
2. Enhancing communication of scholarship students with the government agencies and encouraging them to conduct research and studies which address the developmental challenges in the Kingdom with support being provided to transform their research findings into applied projects and products.
3. Absorbing the graduates of scholarship programmes and Saudi universities into the labour market.

4. Enabling university students to acquire practical experience through part-time work, cooperative training programmes, community service programmes and voluntary projects.
5. Updating educational curricula to stimulate research and innovation.
6. Continuing the scholarship programme, which send students to renowned international universities, to study in specialisations demanded by the development plans and the labour market.
7. Granting administrative and financial autonomy to state-owned universities and endorsing the new regulation of universities.
8. Enhancing the efficiency of HE and expanding the scope of academic assessment and accreditation.
9. Expanding graduate studies programmes and establishing specialised universities of science.
10. Enhancing the research role of universities in line with the future needs of the society.
11. Developing programmes to upgrade the capabilities of the faculty staff.

The development plan has a close association with the issue that is the subject of the current study: it aims to ensure the quality of educational outcomes and relevance to the requirements of the labour market, to review the curriculum, to improve the efficiency of HE, to expand the evaluation process, accreditation and QA. This reflects decision-makers' belief in the importance of supporting the process of ensuring the quality of HE because of its direct impact on development in the Kingdom.

2.7 Education Policy

Education policy refers to the official objectives, direction or guidelines upon which the education process is based. Policy fields include education at different stages; curricula; educational technology; administrative systems and multiple aspects related to education. Trowler (2002) argues that education policy is "a specification of principles and actions, related to educational issues, which are followed or which should be followed and which are designed to bring about desired goals" (p.95). However, these policy perspectives might be inadequate. Trowler (2002) suggests that policy should be seen as a process; something which is dynamic rather than stationary. The dynamism of policy stems from several sources, one of which is possible arguments between policy makers and

implementers about significant issues, challenges and goals within the field. Multiple interpretations of policies exist depending upon the perspectives of stakeholders.

A modern education policy was adopted in KSA in 1969. This policy was derived from Islamic philosophy, which is the doctrine of the nation and a comprehensive system of life. Education policy is a fundamental part of the general policy of the government and is implemented in accordance with the comprehensive plan (M.E, 1995, M.E., 2015b). The Saudi Ministry of education has a vision that seeks to establish a distinct Educational System that builds a Globally Competitive Knowledge-based Community. The Ministry has the mission of providing education to all in an appropriate educational environment within the framework of national education policy. It also aims to promote the quality of education outcomes, increase the effectiveness of scientific research, encourage creativity and innovation, develop community partnership and promote the skills and capabilities of students (M.E., 2015b).

The main education policy document identified seven objectives for HE in KSA (M.E, 1995):

1. Developing the doctrine of loyalty to Allah and continuing to provide students with Islamic culture, which makes them aware of their responsibilities before Allah and for the Nation of Islam, and to make students' scientific abilities and skills useful and fruitful.
2. Preparing qualified citizens who are scientifically and intellectually able to perform their duty in the service of their country, and the advancement of their nation, in the light of the Islamic faith and principles.
3. Providing gifted students with the opportunity to continue postgraduate education in all the fields of academic specialization.
4. Playing a positive role in the field of scientific research that contributes to global progress in literature, science, inventions and the finding of appropriate solutions to the requirements of life and trends of technology.
5. Encouraging authoring and scientific production to serve the Islamic idea, and to enable the country to play a leadership role in participation in building human civilization based on sound principles.
6. Translating science and the useful arts of knowledge into the Arabic language to make knowledge accessible to the greatest number of citizens.

7. Providing training services and rehabilitation programmes to enable graduates, who are already working, to keep pace with continuing developments.

In seeking to further the vision, mission and objectives of Saudi education system, the Ministry of Education has outlined several intentions (M.E., 2015b):

1. Building students' Islamic (national and intellectual) personality in terms of knowledge, skills and values.
2. Providing admission opportunities to students so they can join the education sector.
3. Developing the criteria needed for the selection and qualification of teachers, as well as developing teachers' competencies and motivating them.
4. Promoting quality and upgrading the qualitative level of education.
5. Expanding the construction plus the maintenance of educational buildings and facilities.
6. Producing, disseminating, employing scientific research and knowledge, and expanding higher postgraduate programs.
7. Expanding private education with a view to achieve the development objectives.
8. Upgrading the level of education outputs, in compliance with the requirements of development, as well as with the needs of the society.
9. Developing the regulatory environment and activating governance.
10. Granting overseas scholarships to talented students so to meet the needs of development and the exchange of knowledge.

(M.E., 2015b)

2.8 Higher Education

In 1975 the KSA Ministry of Higher Education was established. The Ministry is responsible for implementing the government's policy in HE. Higher education has considerable support from the government in a variety of ways. The government supports the establishment of new universities and scientific and applied colleges (M.E, 2015b). The government provides significant financial allocations in budgets for HE. In 2015 the government decided to integrate the Ministry of Higher Education with the Ministry of Education. The new Ministry of Education now includes both public education and HE in KSA (M.E, 2015b).

The history of HE institutions in the KSA started in 1950 when the College of Sharia in Makkah was established and secondary school graduates and their equivalents were accepted. The College of Teachers was established in Makkah in 1953 to collaborate with the College of Sharia in the graduation of secondary school teachers. In total, seven universities were established in the years leading up to 1967: Umm Al QURA University 1952, AL- Imam Ibn Saud Islamic University 1953, King Saud University 1957, Islamic University of Madinah 1961, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals 1963, King Fisal University 1964 and King Abdulaziz University. From 1971 the policy of establishing universities in KSA resulted in twenty more universities being instituted by the year 2013. The following table shows the considerable growth of establishing Governmental universities in KSA:

No	Governmental University	The dates of establishment
1.	Umm Al QURA University	1952
2.	AL- Imam Ibn Saud Islamic University	1953
3.	King Saud University	1957
4.	Islamic University of Madinah	1961
5.	King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals	1963
6.	King Faisal University	1964
7.	King Abdulaziz University	1967
8.	Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University	1975
9.	Taif University	1979
10.	King Khalid University	1998
11.	Qassim University	2003
12.	Taibah University	2003
13.	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University	2004
14.	University of Hail	2005
15.	Jazan University	2005
16.	Jouf University	2005
17.	King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz University for Health Sciences	2005
18.	Albaha University	2006
19.	University of Tabuk	2006
20.	Najran University	2006
21.	Northern Border University	2007
22.	Shaqra University	2008
23.	Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University	2009
24.	Majmaah University	2009
25.	Saudi Electronic University	2011
26.	University of Jeddah	2013
27.	University of Bisha	2013

Table 2.1: Governmental universities and dates of establishment (M.E, 2018)

In the last decade, the system of HE in KSA has witnessed rapid growth. Over this time, the Saudi government has maintained substantial and direct regulation over almost all aspects of HE. Historically, the Saudi Higher Education sector has had to rely on the public money for most of its funding and infrastructure. Recently, the private business sector in KSA has started to contribute by providing money and resources to support the growth of research development in universities, including full funding for major endowment projects and research chairs in a variety of disciplines. Although endowments and other charitable contributions comprise a new domain in Saudi HE, this domain represents a significant principle of Saudi religious practice. It therefore represents a natural development in the evolution of HE. As many Saudi universities are now generating much of their own research funding, public universities are increasingly lobbying the Ministry of Education for the right to make their own decisions about the allocation of such funding. The Saudi government still provides significant financial support for public universities and therefore it has exercised strong control over the governance of universities (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). Private universities in the KSA are regulated by the government, with the Ministry of Education overseeing a set of policy guidelines regarding establishment, operation and licensing (GDPHE, 2018).

Saudi higher education comprises three kinds of establishment (M.E, 2015b):

1. Government universities: there are twenty-seven state universities spread across all regions of the Kingdom. These have a high capacity to provide educational opportunities for large numbers of students. These universities offer scientific and practical majors in various fields. All HEIs linked to the Ministry of Education enjoy a great deal of autonomy in administrative, financial and academic aspects (I.M., 2012).
2. Private higher education: in 1997 the government agreed to enable the private sector to establish some ‘not-for-profit’ educational institutions. There are nine private universities and thirty-four private colleges in the country. These educational institutions provide scientific and practical majors in various fields. They are doing their part to meet the needs of development in the Kingdom, and to complement the role played by government universities.
3. Higher education abroad: the government universities send their staff to obtain degrees from distinguished international universities. Under a systematic plan the

Ministry of Education also sends a large number of secondary school graduates to complete their undergraduate studies in excellent international universities.

Today the progress of nations is widely understood to in part depend on the extent to which they build and develop human resources. Higher education is one of the most important means of preparing human capital. Through HE programs, nations aim to meet their needs by building capacity and providing the skills required by the market and for national development (Bush and Coleman, 2000, M.E, 2018). Around the world the HE sector is undergoing change, transformation and facing challenges related to the development of modern technology, information and culture (Duderstadt et al., 2003 and M.E, 2018). Some argue that the challenge today for HEIs is to drive the development of knowledge economies, understood as that part of the economy directly based on the production, dissemination and use of knowledge and information in a variety of products and service activities (Altrichter and Elliot, 2000 and M.E, 2018). To this end, the Saudi government has sought to direct HE towards establishing real partnerships with the labour sector, so that HEIs act as research centres for the production of knowledge by developing programs and methods to provide people with the necessary knowledge and skills to enter the labour market (Al-Anqari, 2006 and Howaidy and Guenuah, 2013). The Saudi Ministry of Education has introduced extensive change, restructuring universities to reflect the trends of development in national and international labour markets through a series of programs and procedures detailed in short, medium and long-term plans. These plans include seven axes: acceptance and absorption, harmonization, quality, finance, scientific research, scholarship and strategic planning (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013 and M.E, 2018).

Through the new Saudi vision 2030, the government is working to close the gap between the outputs of HE and the requirements of the economy and labour market. The new initiatives will help students make careful career decisions. Training will be offered to help them transition between different educational pathways. It is hoped that, by 2030, at least five Saudi universities will be among the top two hundred universities in international rankings. To achieve that, a modern curriculum focused on rigorous standards in literacy, numeracy, skills and character development, is being prepared. Progress in the field of education will be tracked and outcomes will published every year to ensure accountability.

The HE will work closely with the private sector to ensure HE outcomes are in line with the requirements of the market (Saudi Vision-2030, 2018).

The following table gives selected figures relating to the expansion and development of the HE sector in KSA:

Government universities	27
Colleges in government universities	508
Students in government universities	880,003
Faculty members in government universities	45169
Institutes and scientific research centres	238
Scientific associations	135
Scientific journals	53
Private universities	11
Private colleges	39
Technical colleges	37
High technical institutes for girls	14
Industrial colleges	5

Table 2. 2: Selected Higher Education Statistics in Saudi Arabia (M.E, 2018)

In spite of this large quantitative expansion in HE, the development of quality has been limited (Zaher, 2007). Consequently, in the past few years, academic institutions have tended to reconsider their institutional planning, academic programmes and activities, so to ensure they fit with the changing requirements of the era. This has included evaluating educational process, academic accreditation, QA and the drawing up of plans for improvement and development (Zaher, 2007, I.M., 2012).

2.9 Quality Assurance and the Challenge of Context

Higher Education is a key aspect of modern states. Countries of all sizes and levels of development are keen to establish more institutions and develop them on an ongoing basis. This due to the perceived importance of the role played by education in propelling countries to advanced levels of growth (Albhouachi and al-Rubaie, 2005). Hopper (2007) points out that in most developing countries there is an increase in population and an improvement in high school completion rates. These factors have led to a rapid expansion

in demand for HE. This expansion has previously caused a pressure on government spending for each student which can result in a negative impact on the quality of education. Currently, many governments tend to consider QA a priority and focus on structuring QAP for HE by establishing QA systems, or by enhancing and even reforming existing QA systems to confront new challenges (Hopper, 2007).

Borrowing successful initiatives or policies from somewhere else is a familiar practice for governments and often stems from a previous successful application of such policies or initiatives. Such borrowing, however, may lead to insufficient attention being paid to the cultural context in which an initiative will be applied – due to the mistaken belief that traversing cultural boundaries is easy (Harris, 2009). Albhouachi and al-Rubaie (2005) indicate that the application of any system to improve the quality of an education institution must ensure that the system does not become a hindrance to the advancement of the institution due to lack of compatibility with the cultural context of the organisation. It is therefore important to ensure that any new system is consistent with political, educational and social culture, economic requirements, and also take account of cultural values and tradition. Harris (2009) confirms that the borrowing of successful policies and initiatives makes sense, but the "cultural fit" should be taken into account and indeed is crucial in ensuring any the success of the adopted system.

In the light of the slow response of Arab countries to the QA trend, many studies confirmed that the response is protracted due to challenges such as the expansion of demand for HE, mismatched outputs of HE to the needs of the labour market and the weakness of education curricula (Barakat, 2009, Hamid, 2006, Tarawneh, 2010, Otaibi, 2009). There is also the challenge of funding for new QA activities, the difficulty of finding faculty for required specializations with sufficient experience, plus the absence of clear policies to build up the capacity of human resources. There can also be a lack of harmony between the management style of a university and requirements for the development of modern HEIs, together with an absence of strategic planning. Administrative procedures can be complicated. There can also be a deficiency in the adoption of a vision, mission and objectives, which direct the work of HEIs towards QA (Barakat, 2009, Hamid, 2006, Tarawneh, 2010, Otaibi, 2009). Hopper (2007) argues that despite there being some agreement on QA mechanisms and the general principles of good practice, each country has its own unique context and its own purposes for QA. For

example, the QA needs for the HE systems in developed countries can be vastly different from the needs of those in developing countries. Attention must be paid, therefore, to local challenges – such as a lack of resources and capacity to conduct and complete effective QAP.

Saudi Arabia has not been immune from the challenges faced by countries in the region in seeking to improve the quality of education. In response to a continuing demand to develop HE, Saudi Arabia has adopted and instigated quality systems. Today an independent assessment body monitors HEIs on an ongoing basis to ensure their commitment to national standards. Saudi Arabia has become part of a global policy trend towards activity focused on quality in HE (M.E, 2015c). The Ministry of Education has taken action in order to build a good cultural context in preparation for the ongoing implementation of QA systems. Many universities have updated academic curricula plans and established more modern academic programmes. Partnerships were conducted with local and international bodies to support the efforts of universities (Bakhit, 2009). Some universities have developed campus environments in accordance with this and introduced a number of e-management applications to accomplish such management activities (Bakhit, 2009).

In 2004, the Saudi government established an independent national body concerned with assessment and academic accreditation to ensure the quality of HE: namely, the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA). Section 10 of Chapter 4 in this study reviews the new academic accreditation and QA systems in KSA.

The Commission sought to achieve the following objectives (M.E, 2015c, p8):

1. Develop rules, standards and conditions of evaluation and academic accreditation, and formulate regulations to ensure their application in different academic institutions after high school.
2. Establish rules and standards relating to practices of academic work – such as teaching, training and the of drafting regulations to ensure their application in academic institutions.
3. Accredit new university or equivalent institutions – such as colleges and institutes – and accredit their departments, specialties and academic plans.
4. Review and evaluate the academic performance of existing university or equivalent institutions periodically and accredit their departments and plans.

5. Coordinate the accreditation of programmes and departments of HEIs in the Kingdom by global accreditation bodies.
6. Evaluate and accredit bachelor's degrees, higher diploma programmes, masters and doctoral degrees or the equivalent, and review their requirements periodically.
7. Evaluate and accredit specialised post-high school academic programmes, whether they are governmental or private.
8. Evaluate and accredit training programmes in government and private educational institutions.
9. Participate in the preparation of general plans and the development of academic performance in different fields.
10. Disseminate information and data relating to academic accreditation for the purposes of raising awareness, scientific research, and the making of information available to parties and individuals.

In 2012, only two of the twenty-five government universities could apply full QAP and had obtained institutional accreditation (Alarabiya.net, 2012). At the end of 2016, NCAAA pointed out that the number of universities that have obtained institutional accreditation had increased to five (NCAAA, 2016).

This limited achievement, following all the effort, resources and time invested, is surely a catalyst and call for research to explore the factors or challenges blocking or limiting HEIs from reasonable and necessary achievements in the field of QA. From my point of view, as a citizen of KSA, this can be observed in many projects of reform or development in several sectors of Saudi government institutions. It is difficult to determine the main challenges, but from my experience of working in several public education institutions, and from my observation of the behaviour of individuals in social media, I noticed the impact of different intellectual arguments among stakeholders towards reform and development projects. This controversy has often divided most of the stakeholders into liberals and conservatives, and religion has become a major focus. Therefore, it is possible that such contention has a role in the failure to achieve satisfactory progress in the field of QA in HE. Hassan (2012) emphasises the importance of taking account of the local religious culture when embarking on the development of education projects, or the renewal of the education process to cope with changes and contemporary requirements.

In considering the intellectual and cultural conflict that seems to affect the application of the new QA system, the liberal wing believes that there is a lack of political vision and strong will to change and there is no clear strategy. In addition, the national education policy is out-of-date. It was developed in 1968 and it has not been updated since. Moreover, there is no recognition of the problem – this can be seen, for example, in the decision-makers tendency to use the term 'development' instead of 'reform.' The liberal wing believes that reform and development projects in education often fail due to lack of consensus among the intellectual leaders of change. Liberals usually blame the conservative wing. They do this because the conservatives often show significant caution towards change and development projects that they believe come from outside the country and may threaten the identity of the community. Consequently, because the conservative wing gets wide support from the government and society, the progress of development projects have been slow. Despite the presence of movement towards change in Saudi universities, such movement remains vulnerable to relapse because it is not based on a clear identity and strong policies. Thus, legitimacy, solidity and continuity cannot be guaranteed (Essa, 2010).

Conversely, the conservative wing confirms that religious culture does not reject any project to develop education if it complies with local religious and cultural teachings. In this regard, Hassan (2012) points out that the quality issue is a main principle in the religious community and that the term ‘quality’ is linked to many of the principles in the local culture, such as transparency, credibility, control and good performance. Zayer and Sabri (2012) define QA from an Islamic perspective as a process aimed at producing high quality educational products through offering required incomes with continuous improvements which are based on defined standards to achieve market requirements. The main motivation behind this process is that of reward from Allah. Although the conservative wing seeks to move towards continuous development of the mission of educational institutions and their objectives, the optimal investment of financial and human resources and the enhancement of the quality of education, they show some caution about following the new global trends in the QA field because they may have concerns over the consequences of globalization and the fear of losing cultural identity. Therefore, their response might be subsequently slow toward reforms and development projects (El-Arini, 2007, Al-Sultani, 2015).

It can be concluded that both sides might seek to achieve the same goal. Nevertheless, the responses look different and unfortunately the controversy is continuing, hindering reform and the development of projects. This may be due to an inability to manage and invest the variety of perspectives in the completion of reform. This study has the potential to contribute to the discovery of more possible dimensions and issues with cultural challenges, and other challenges pertinent to the limited achievements in QA operation in Saudi HE. In addition, it seeks to provide educators and decision-makers with a heuristic framework to help build a solid cultural context for the successful operation of QA.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has presented some factors relevant to the research context of KSA. It described the ruling system, geographic facts, the status of the economy and the development of ICT. It highlighted Saudi Arabia's HE policy, objectives and the HE objectives in the last development plan (2015–2019). The culture challenge and the development of QA and accreditation were also outlined. The following chapters will discuss HE in KSA in more detail as it relates to this study.

Chapter 3: Change in Higher Education

3.1 Introduction

"*Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."*

– Surat ar-Rad, Verse 11 (International, 2012, p. 229)

Human societies are always looking for change to improve their living conditions and continuously face ongoing challenges. Many questions arise when there is a discussion about change – Who has the power to make a change? How can change be achieved? What are the laws that govern change? The Holy Quran (the main source of guidance in Islam) answered these questions fourteen centuries ago. Modern theories of change have reached the same conclusion. The verse quoted at the start of this chapter, which is expresses a fundamental basis for change, says change should begin from inside (within the souls of individuals) then Allah will provide the necessary help. This means that in order to contribute to the improvement of conditions and the solving of problems, change must be driven by a real inner desire on the part of individuals and groups.

From a practical perspective, change is a key attribute of all political, economic, social and cultural institutions, because any immutability of a particular system may lead to a wasting of opportunities and the delaying of the organisation's achievements. Change explains the growth in an organisation's capabilities. Success or failure reflects organisation's capacities to respond to change and how they interact with change, internally and externally.

Change is a constant across the developed world. In particular, public sector organisations have been transformed into private ones; market mechanisms have been rehabilitated; large organisations have been dispersed and others have faded away. The education sector has been part of these wider currents and orientations. Change in business organisations is at the forefront of many developments and has an impact on all domains of life. Although there are fundamental differences between the worlds of education and business, the vast knowledge and experience that has grown up around the management of change in business and industry has been borrowed to support the education sector in its management of change (Morrison, 1998, p. 1, Carnall, 1999, p. 8).

Education is one key area where change has become more than just a necessity, especially in an era of rapid information development, innovation in education curricula and diversity of disciplines. Sursock et al. (2010) point out that HEIs have been affected by several change factors in the past decade, including increasing participation rates, globalization, an increasing importance attached to knowledge, its impact on the orientation of global economies and increased international competition.

This study perceives QA as an issue of change in HE. Addressing the issue of change is an essential introduction to building a clear concept of QA practices: its factors for success and failure. This chapter provides a description of change concepts in public organisations and especially in the HE sector, global trends, strategies of change, models and lessons learned. It defines essential processes and components that suit the HE sector through the perspective of scholars and researchers in the field of public organisation and education. More consideration will be given to change conditions in Arab countries, as developing countries, and especially to the case of KSA as it is the case study context of the research.

3.2 The Concept of Change in Higher Education

It can be difficult to determine the meaning of the term 'change' as is an umbrella term that includes numerous concepts linked to reform, renewal, development, innovation, enhancement and improvement. Sengupta et al. (2006, p. 2) have defined change as a method of altering an existing institution to enhance its effectiveness in terms of achieving its objectives through organisational change that aims to make modifications to the institutional structure, methods and processes, or introduce new notions and behaviours. According to Kanter (1997):

> …change involves the crystallisation of new possibilities (new policies, new behaviours, new patterns, new methodologies, new products or new market ideas) based on the reconceptualised patterns in the organisation. The architecture of change involves the design and construction of new patterns, or the reconceptualization of old ones, to make new, and hopefully more productive actions possible (p. 279).

Law and Glover (2000, p. 128) point out that the idea that "change is essentially a rational, technocratic activity which can be mandated, is clearly thought through and leads to

measurable outcomes, is one that has been increasingly challenged and found to be misleading."

According to Anderson and Anderson (2001, pp. 32-40), there are three types of change in organisations. Firstly, a developmental change that aims to improve existing skills, methods, performance criteria or states that seem not to be compatible with current or future requirements. Secondly, transitional change is a complex type of change that begins when leaders or staff recognise that a problem in the current operation needs to be tackled, or when an opportunity is not followed up, thus requiring a change to provide better services to meet current and future demands. The third type of change is the most complex change that has recently been confronting organisations – i.e. transformational change, which is a revolutionary shift from an existing condition to another. To successfully implement this type of change requires a significant shift of culture, behaviour and the efforts of stakeholders. French and Bell (1999, p. 2) have indicated that change has several facets. It can be planned or unplanned, it can be large or small. It can be comprehensive and reach all parts of an organisation or only some parts. Change can be fast and revolutionary, or slow and gradually moving. It can change a situation fundamentally or involve only slight modifications. Thus, it is important that leaders and practitioners be aware that each type and case of change requires specific preparation and actions.

Any nation's progress depends on the extent to which it builds and develops its human resources. Higher education represents one of the most important means of developing human resources, which in turn are considered a strategic investment for any country (Al-Anqari, 2006). Through HE programmes nations seek to fulfil their need for a knowledgeable and skilled labour force which meets the demands of the labour market and which is required for national development. Globally, HE exhibits many of the changes, transformations and challenges imposed by the technical and informational developments of contemporary civilisation (Bush and Coleman, 2000, p. 7, Al-Anqari, 2006). Higher education has required to be restructured to meet the needs of an increasingly technology-oriented economy, to deliver the requisite research, highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to address national needs so to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context (Duderstadt et al., 2003).

Bush and Coleman (2000) have stated that educational organisations grow in a particular political, economic and social context. Educational organisations are social organisations,

and therefore they are vulnerable to rapid changes in the surrounding environment. At times they legislate new policies and at times must adapt in response to multiple changes in society (Christensen et al., 2006). The development of education is a matter of great concern in all countries of the world (Madani, 2002). According to Madani (2002) there is a realisation that developing countries need to reform their education systems. It is helpful, he argues, to understand change in HE at a global level in the light of four axes: the expansion of education policies; the reformation of systems and methods of study; the guidance of scientific research in universities to serve the community and the movement towards quality HE (Madani, 2002).

According to Alzahrani (1996) change in HE is inevitable and the goal of that change depends on its type, extent, place, time and the circumstances that led to it. Scott (2004) points out that changes in HEIs can vary in terms of their conditions and extent. Some institutions have never instituted change before, so they have to develop change from the very lowest level. Others have focused primarily on change that helps them adapt to suit specific circumstances. There is also the fact that some changes are broad in scope and affect the whole university or entire sectors of an institution, whereas others are much more local and individual in nature.

Change in educational institutions has, at various times, been characterised in many countries by centralisation and decentralisation. Governments have increased their control over curriculums, over the related assessments and examinations, while giving institutions more autonomy in managing resources and staff. Moreover, there has been a creation of competition among educational institutions, with education being described as a business market (Levačić, 1995, p. 28, Bush and Coleman, 2000). From another viewpoint, Storberg-Walker and Torraco (2004) argue that HEIs are facing transformational changes that affect all sections and levels of the institution. Leaders, managers and practitioners therefore have demanding work to do in the management of change. Change can take place as a result of collective action among academics, expanded discussions, exchanges of views, all focusing on educational quality and excellence and with consideration for academic traditions. The structure of administration, managerial levels and the diversity of cultures in HEIs contribute to an acceleration of the process of change, which, compared to change in the business sector, is considered to be slow (Storberg-Walker and Torraco, 2004).

Levin (1999) and Theeb (2009) have demonstrated that changes take place in HE at different levels and that there are significant factors through which changes can affect HEIs. For example, change can affect the academic profession and administration, students' affairs, the curriculum, funding, educational technology and communications, productivity and efficiency, external competition, restructuring, state intervention, partnerships, training and finance.

A report by (Sursock et al., 2010) noted that HE in European countries over the past decade has been in a continuous state of rapid change. Furthermore, some of these changes were unplanned and beyond the control of the players involved. According to this analysis, the most prominent changes that have taken place in European HE systems included : the reformation of QA systems (18 countries); changes in research policies (15 countries); expanding of organisational autonomy (12 countries) and reform of the funding system (12 countries).

Decision-makers in the Saudi Arabian government – the focus of this study – have realised the urgency of developing the HE system so that it is compatible with world standards of excellence and offers traditional and non-traditional majors. They see that this development will directly support the future of the social and economic development of the country. Saudi Arabia relies on oil for its economy and to fund development projects. In the light of the global trend towards decreasing dependence on oil, there are political trends inside and outside the Kingdom to do more research and develop new strategies and policies for the political, social and economic future. All these trends have made the country a focus of attention from academics and business leaders, with a regard to taking advantage of the available opportunities (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013, p. 1). Chapter 2 discusses change in more detail together with the development of the HE system in KSA.

3.3 Change Forces in Higher Education

The significant changes in the social and economic environments caused by technology and globalisation have forced organisations worldwide to make wide alterations related to their objectives, strategies and frameworks in order to adapt, survive and succeed in the 21st century (Marquardt and Kearsley, 1999). Higher education institutions find themselves in a new era where they are facing many challenges and factors that force and drive them towards change (Storberg-Walker and Torraco, 2004). Interested actors and researchers

have discussed, from different perspectives, the forces of change in public organisations generally, and in education institutions in particular.

Hellriegel and Slocum (2010) point to four significant forces of change in organisations: (1) globalisation (numerous marketplaces are global and are managed and served by worldwide or international organisations); (2) technology (which has a profound impact on individuals, teamwork, and institutions); (3) social networks (which change approaches to securing a job, communicating and forming groups); and lastly (4) the differences between generations and personal attitudes towards work (pp. 511–515). Kanter (1999) agrees with the first two factors and adds 'industry consolidation' to the list.

In another classification, Sengupta et al. (2006, pp. 2-3) and Kiritsis (2009) have indicated that there are two types of pressures: internal and external. The main internal forces are, firstly, expanding organisation size, which drives change in organisational structure and in the complexity of operations. Secondly, when an organisation identifies a gap between its objectives and the results, an organisation faces the inevitability of change to reduce or bridge the gap. Thirdly, a change in the values and needs of staff leads to a change in the organisation's policies – for example, demands for increasing financial incentives. The last potential factor is that a change in the senior management may lead to changes in ideas regarding operating the organisation's system, structure and processes. External change factors are technology, external stakeholders' demands and the economic, political and demographic conditions of the surrounding environment.

During the 1990s many universities and HE organisations around the world began to change their traditional forms of educational governance and to adopt new structures and practices. As most scholars of HE suggest, the major reason for these new directions in HE was aspects of globalisation, which is seen to be changing the nature of HE (Theeb, 2009). Changes can occur in any institution, especially social organisations such as universities. The significant systems operating in universities are affected by various challenges and pressures that occur inside or outside the institution (Kiritsis, 2009).

Altrichter and Elliot (2000) argue that the economy, in particular, impacts on the education sector in several ways. Economic conditions influence the educational budget and policies on educational spending. The trend of the business sector towards reducing costs and increasing productivity is reflected not just in the education budget, but it also puts pressure on education institutions to reduce costs and increase their productivity. Another

issue is the close connection between education and economic development. In a reciprocal relationship, good education improves technology and qualifies individuals so that they can obtain a high-level job. This relation influences education policy (pp. 14–15). In addition, a number of educators have pointed out that the concepts and models of the economic sector permeate educational practices and policies. Firm structure, for instance, is applied as a model for educational institution governance (Boyd et al., 1994).

Alzahrani (1996) has identified a number of catalysts for change in HEIs, such as the desire to improve individual and organisational performance, improve society's perceptions of the output of education and its institutions, external pressures, the availability of funds, and dissatisfaction with the situation of the institution which in turn drives change (in order to reduce frustration).

The phenomenon of globalisation seems to be the most prominent factor leading change in the world. It affects the field of education as it affects the economic, political and social fields. The educational system has become an open system that is influenced by global political, economic and technological changes. This is reflected in the trends and objectives of education systems and their components, from inputs, processes, outputs and management. Therefore, educational systems seek to change and adapt to the requirements of the era in which they exist (Howaidy and Guenuah, 2013). As a response to globalisation, the education system in KSA – the focus of this study – seems preoccupied to some extent with achieving high levels in international rankings. There is a great concern on the part of universities in the country to achieve "world-class" standards. A number of educators and researchers have indicated that the orientation of change in the system is self-imposed, following an overwhelming desire by Saudi HEIs and academic staff. There is also external pressure, such as international trends in education, the economic conditions and demands for higher quality (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013, p. 178).

Alhadi (2013) suggests that, more than in developed countries, the HEIs in developing countries must interact with global changes and the requirements of new realities. They must have the flexibility and dynamism necessary to move towards the future because these institutions are obliged to adapt to the reality imposed by the era of globalisation and to the use of modern technologies. This requires leaders who have a forward-looking vision in order to bring about a comprehensive development in knowledge – in the cultural, professional, research and societal spheres; to promote a culture of quality and excellence;

to place an emphasis on development strategies; to update organizational structures; to change traditional systems; and to develop existing skills and leadership styles.

Multiple factors have been identified as driving globalization in today's society. The internet, easy international communication, transportation technology and the increasing flow of students and highly educated individuals across borders (Altbach, 2004, Castells, 2010 and Hellriegel and Slocum 2010), all contribute to this process. Lightfoot (2016), from a critical perspective, argues that globalization can be described as unfettered capitalism which places restrictions upon democracy and limits the ability of governments to act, except in ways determined by the free market. In this case, education becomes simply an economic resource, with the school curriculum determined by commercial and utilitarian deliberations. Storberg-Walker and Torraco (2004), and Altbach (2004) claimed that the globalization phenomenon in HE and science is unavoidable. They consider that academia has always been international in scope and has continuously been characterised by inequalities. It becomes difficult, in the 21st century, for an academic system to be established in a form of national isolation. The challenge is to recognise the complexities and diversities of the modern context and then seek to form a global academic environment that recognises the need to make sure that academic relationships are comparatively equal. Altbach (2004) underlines the importance of ensuring that globalization does not become the neocolonialism of the 21st century. In the Arab context, Najjar (2005) outlines three types of responses to globalization within Arab states. Firstly, there are those who reject it completely as it is a form of cultural imperialism that threatens their local traditions and cultures. Secondly, there are those, mainly from secular society, who welcome globalization as a force for modernization anticipating the bringing forth of an age of modern science, communication and freedom of choice. Thirdly, there are those who believe it is possible to find a form of globalization that suits local cultures and beliefs.

Morrow and Torres (2013) suggest that "there are many facets of globalization, neoliberal forms of globalization concentrate on the political and economic aspects that most strongly affect education" (p.99). Harvey (2007) defined neoliberalism as "in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p.2). Kotz (2002) suggests that neoliberalism is both a body of economic theory and a policy stance. Rhoads and Torres (2006) argue that globalization is the

vehicle of neoliberalism, which has consecutively marked the character of globalization, although this relationship is not inevitable. Rather, it is the consequence of political and economic decisions. Burbules and Torres (2000) argue that neoliberalism benefits from the historical development of globalization in that the interests of particular existing economic configurations, about how to run the economy through free trade and deregulation take, the fore, along with the implication of prescriptions about how to change education, politics, and culture.

Keating et al. (2013) highlights the agenda of neoliberal economies around the world in education, which is "to weaken public control over education while simultaneously encouraging privatization of the educational service and greater reliance on market forces" (p. 247). In Arab states, Zaitoon 2013 highlights that the combination of globalization and the idea of neoliberalism and associated global economic agreements has led to privatization in the education sector, even in Arab countries that have not been linked to international agreements. For example, some of the Gulf Arab countries have been immersed in different patterns of exchange in cross-border education services with foreign investors being permitted to open branches of their educational institutions. In addition, other countries have entered into cooperation agreements that are more conducive to the interests of foreign countries, such as the movment of individuals to study abroad; which has become an important income source for Western countries (Zaitoon, 2013). Kotz (2002) speculates that if neoliberalism continues to be the leading ideology and policy stance, world capitalism may confront a future of stagnation, instability and possible eventual social collapse.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that while the discussion above suggests that universities are not immune from the impacts of globalisation and change, "not all nations have responded to globalisation in the same way because of the specificities of their national history, politics, culture, and economy." Therefore, "we must contextually analyse the interaction between a range of critical shaping factors in the local context and the impetus for change driven by global trends" (Mok, 2000, p. 174).

3.4 Change, Challenges and Reasons for Failure

Understanding and managing change in organisations requires that complex tasks be carried out to face potential challenges. Planning for change may sometimes not succeed, and may lead to the challenge of change results that have not been taken into account.

Organisations, therefore, must be able to adapt quickly and effectively in order to be able to continue their activities. Rapid and complex change may be a difficult test for the adaptation capacity of the leadership and members in the organisation. If they fail, the cost may be very high. It is necessary that the stakeholders understand the nature of the change requirements, the expected outcomes and the alternatives available to bring about change (Hellriegel and Slocum, 2010, p. 510).

Scholars and researchers highlight several types of challenges that may emerge in dealing with change in organisations. Some challenges are broad and others focus on specific stages of change or parts or components of an organisation. This section, with a specific focus on HEIs, reviews the literature around perspectives on challenges in organisational change that could influence the effectiveness of change operations.

Newman (2006) indicates that change in an organisation can be more likely to fail if there is insufficient support from leaders, insufficient buy-in from stakeholders, anxieties about consequences and accountability, slow reactions to obstacles and continuing allegiance to old methods. Harris et al. (2003) have outlined other obstacles to fostering change, including perceived misconceptions, lack of organisational resources and an inability to evaluate efforts based on criteria.

Kotter (1995) considered more than 100 organisations undergoing change and identified eight critical reasons why the failure of a change initiative might occur. These are: (1) not creating a sufficient sense of urgency or motivation for change; (2) failing to establish sufficient power and support; (3) lacking a sensible vision; (4) no credible communication to broadcast the vision; (5) permitting barriers that block the way to the new vision; (6) not designing a plan for short-term wins; (7) the announcement of success before the change becomes ingrained in the organisational culture; and (8) neglecting the consolidation of the change culture in the organisation (pp. 60–67). Furthermore, Longenecker et al. (2007) conducted a study of more than a hundred companies in the United States to identify errors that led to the desired results of change not being reached. The study agreed with some of the reasons identified in Kotter's study but also added other significant reasons for failure. These included: poor skills and channels of communication; poor communication skills and relationships; lack of specific skills and job mismatches; unclear strategic direction; inability to adapt quickly and change old habits; poor empowerment and delegation; lack of integrity and trust; inability to create an atmosphere of teamwork; inability to lead people and encourage them; lack of planning; weakness in monitoring performance and

providing feedback; inability to remove obstacles to performance; vanity and bad attitudes; failure to recruit qualified individuals and development; and, lastly, mismanagement of resources.

> Change is not just about the creation of new policies and procedures to implement external mandates. It is also about the development of personal strategies by individuals to respond to, and seek to influence the impact of, structural and cultural change: personal change as well as organisational change (Bennett et al., 1992, p. 2).

Change may cause pressure and tension among both those who are leading the change (who support it, face challenges and deal with the pressure of encouraging others in a world of difficult conditions) and opponents or those fearful of change (Carnall, 1999, p. 13).

Change in an organisation is usually seen as a threat rather than an opportunity (Kanter, 1999). According to Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) there are four reasons for resistance: (1) anxiety about losing something valuable; (2) a lack of understanding and confidence in the results of change; (3) considering the change as costly for individuals and the organisation, and having no sense; (4) fear of not being able to develop the skills and behaviours needed.

Kiritsis (2009) provides several examples of reasons for resistance. Individuals might perceive change as a threat because it could lead to a loss of position, job, status and power. Leading staff to the change without explaining the reasons for change, what it will involve and expected advantages, will lead to resistance and critical challenges. Moreover, a lack of knowledge and limited qualifications on the part of staff reduces the desire to participate in the change process. Deal and Terrence (2008) have the same perspectives, they believe making changes in a workplace where tasks are usually conducted routinely makes employees feel concerned and confused, especially when they are asked to do new work, or they have not participated in its development or they have a lack of necessary skills for the implementation. The likliehood is that they will not just reject the change, but may also may not participate in it and, furthermore, seek to thwart the process. And, if they are forced to change, they will work superficially. Rehabilitation of individuals, scientifically and psychologically, is necessary before implementing change, until the staff understand and feel comfortable with the new working methods (pp. 381–382).

Perlmutter (2005) raises some significant points in regard to academia. Professors work for many years in the same position, engage in the same tasks and teach the same subjects. This leads them to prefer the same routine and method followed in the work, and means they are not willing to change. Change may cause disorder and uncertainty. In addition, academics become resentful when change comes from the top. It is important to recognise that administrators views change differently from academics, who prefer to feel that change is for their benefit. Olson (2006) highlights the lack of trust between faculty and administrators where the promotion of the idea of a conspiracy further creates an atmosphere of stubbornness and defiance among all parties. Thus change fails. The administrators must work with academics to develop an atmosphere of confidence and trust and to move away from the suspicion of conspiracy. If they do work well together then change will succeed. Carnall (2007) furthermore stresses that change creates risks, doubts and increased economic and psychological pressures. There is an urgent need to build an agreed vision, identify the process steps to be followed, and to promote a concept of participation in order to achieve future goals (Smyth and Van der Vegt, 1993).

The implementation phase in respect of change is one of the most critical stages: it engages more participants than those who were engaged in the planning stage (Law and Glover, 2000, p. 134). Smyth and Van der Vegt (1993) identify four types of pressures that may unsettle the existing system of organisation and impede the implementation of the change process:

1. A pressure to increase the influence of centralization in the management of the implementation of the change project.
2. A pressure from executive directors to obtain more autonomy and power – in relation to the operation of implementation activities and in relation to engaging staff in new behaviors.
3. A pressure from inside the organisation to create a unified reaction to the external environment, to spread the new identity of the organisation to stakeholders, and to gain an accepted new stature in society.
4. A pressure for a differentiated response to the incentives and disincentives posed by the change concept.

Carnall (2007) proposes a model with five stages for how some individuals experience change processes. Firstly: **denial** is the first response to the need for change. People cling to the present, whatever the circumstances. If the change is also a surprise it is expected

that the performance will drop at this stage. The direct impact of change should therefore be reduced in order to help people to accommodate the new reality. Secondly: at this stage, the change becomes clearer, individuals find themselves with new duties and roles, perhaps in new departments and with new managers and teams. This may lead to frustration as a result of difficulty dealing with the change, leading to **defensive** behaviour, which often prevails at this stage. This behaviour may affect efforts to create an atmosphere that helps individuals to understand the change. Thirdly, individuals recognise that change is inevitable; therefore, they start at this stage to **discard** the past, show openness to change, optimism about the future, provide initiatives and propose solutions to the problems. Time is an important factor at this stage, for people to restore a sense of new identity and self-esteem. Fourthly: in the **adaptation** stage, individuals begin to exercise new business practices according to different criteria and learn new ways and mechanisms of working. Errors are to be expected during the implementation of a new system, so it is important at this stage to provide support and training to ensure the success of the change in the long term. Fifthly, the last stage is **internalisation**, when the people involved have accepted the change in the organization, formed new relationships, tried the new system and processes, and the new style of work has become a part of their natural behaviour. It is important to note that some members of the organisation may not go through all these phases at the same time and some individuals may stop at any stage (pp. 240–244).

From a psychological point of view it has been suggested that people are able to respond to change if the structures and strategies have been prepared, there is a healthy environment for communication, there is an appreciation of individuals' successes and the creation of an atmosphere that helps individuals to grow and develop. Continuous evaluation of the process of change and the methods of operation, the monitoring of results and monitoring of ambient conditions contributes to knowing whether the change succeeded or not (Cameron and Green, 2009, p 60). Strategies should be selected to manage the process of change and its challenges and should take into account all the factors affecting change phases, whether inside or outside the organisation, to ensure the highest levels of success and to reduce losses.

Further consideration of the challenges of change is provided in Section 8 of Chapter 4 (4.11), where challenges in the operation of QA in HE are discussed. Approaches and

strategies for dealing with change challenges will be reviewed in the following section (3.5).

3.5 Approaches, Models and Strategies for Managing Change

Many disciplines are involved in the literature relating to change; because change is a natural cycle of life in all types of organisation, whatever their purpose. Profit and prosperity are crucial, especially for business organisations that wish to survive. Therefore, specialists in business administration have had a prominent role in enriching the literature on change and developing models and strategies that can assist a successful change. These efforts help all types of organisation to achieve their goals, including HE organisations. The following section highlights the main approaches to change, well-known models and strategies and the potential roles of change drivers.

3.5.1 Approaches to Change

An approach to managing a change initiative is affected by context and the surrounding conditions. Types and orientations of stakeholders, cultural components and organisational structure are factors that need to be considered to determine the appropriate approach to change (Priestley, 2011).

There are two main approaches to change in organisations: emergent change and planned change (Burnes, 2004). The planned change approach means that the change goes through a planning stage first and then proceeds in predictable cycles and stages (Kennedy, 2004). Wilson (1992) argues:

> … in the extreme, planned change strategies would be those processes in which there was a smooth transition from some previously articulated strategic vision towards a future desired state (such as an envisaged portfolio of potentially successful products and services) (p. 27).

On the other hand, the emergent change approach follows a point of view that says that change cannot be planned and that those who are change drivers must be aware of all the internal and external factors affecting the organisation, must react quickly, and then must conduct the necessary changes (Kennedy, 2004). Burnes (2004) argues that "the focus of emergent change is continuous, synergistic, interconnected change which, though small or medium-sized in nature, affects the organisation and its major sub-systems" (p. 397).

Kezar (2001) argues that there are two critical reasons to develop an elaborate approach to making a change in HEIs: the first is that ignoring some of the influential factors results in mistaken analysis of an institution's situation and mistakes in the selection of appropriate strategies. The second reason is that using concepts that are foreign to the values of the academic community may fail to convince the stakeholders to participate in the change process (pp. 7– 8).

As previously outlined, this study considers QA in HE and the potential of e-management in relation to QAP. This issue seems to be a major focus of change in HEIs because it has a significant impact on all related components and needs a clear strategic vision and widespread involvement of people. The following chapter will discuss the issue in detail. The following section (3.5.2) will review several well-known models for managing change that have been discussed in the literature under the umbrella of planned approaches, and are applicable to QA as a change project.

3.5.2 Models of Change

Lewin (1945) has stated that "nothing is as practical as a good theory" (p. 129). Ghoshal (2005), has more recently suggested that "nothing is as dangerous as a bad theory" (p. 86). This means that bad management models are likely to destroy good management practices. Models that cannot be explained and applied are therefore not models but fall into the category of wishes, hopes or sermons.

The term "model", according to Tichy (1983, p.38), "refers to assumptions and beliefs which together represent reality. These models or theories guide action''. Many models of organisational change have been developed theoretically and practically. Leaders and managers who are successful adapt, learn and act quickly, while less effective managers try to control and curb the wave of change. It is important for the change leader to choose an appropriate model to help the organisation survive and grow (Pryor et al., 2008).

Kezar (2001) provides a list of key features that need to be taken into account when developing or applying a model of change in HEIs or thinking systematically about change: encourage the self-discovery of the organisation, the understanding and awareness of the organisation culture; recognise political influences; lay the groundwork; focus on adaptation; strengthen interaction for the development of mental models; create a balanced

atmosphere between the internal and external environment; combine traditional teleological tools like vision development, planning, or strategy with the social and cultural cognitions and political strategies; realise that the process of change is disorderly; enhance participation in governance and decision-making; clarify basic characteristics; recognise the full picture; link the process of institutional change with individual identity; create a risk culture and help individuals change their beliefs; realise that every kind of change and every part of the organisation may need to follow different models; realise that change initiatives differ from the change strategy; consider the possibility of merging approaches or models. (see Kezar (2001, pp. 113–123).

In the following part of this section, five models of change will be discussed and compared. These models have been chosen because they present as suitable for use in leading some types of change initiative in HE. The table 3.1 outlines the steps of the following models of change, which are given as examples in the change management literature: the three-step model (Lewin, 1947); the eight-phase model (Kotter, 1995); the ten-step model (Jick, 1999); the seven-step model (Garvin, 2000); and the twelve-step model (Mento et al., 2002).

Three-step model (Lewin, 1947)

It is proposed that there are three main steps of making change: unfreezing, moving and freezing of a level (Lewin, 1947). Unfreezing: in this step the requirement is to define the current situation, remove prejudices and complacency and identify the desired goals. Moving: this is the implementation phase of the change and the transition to a new stage, through participation. Freezing: at this stage a new situation is installed through policies and bonuses and the development of new standards (Kennedy, 2004), (Cameron and Green, 2009, pp. 110, 111).

This model is based on the idea that when change has been implemented it must be re-frozen; otherwise, it will be short-lived because people return quickly to their previous practices. It is proposed in order to change the culture of the organisation and its policy, then maintaining the change and upgrading to a higher level (Kennedy, 2004, Robbins and Judge, 2013, p. 586).

Pryor et al. (2008) point out this model is for planned change and may not respond to emergent change; however, it may be applicable in a case when there is an expectation of the emergence of some future changes.

Eight-phase model (Kotter, 1995)

Kotter has developed an eight step model after investigating 100 organisations that varied in their size and type. After consulting with these organisations, he identified eight mistakes that could lead to a failure in a change initiative. Kotter developed this model as a way to help organisations avoid such major mistakes. The model highlights the key steps in implementing change by addressing the main issues, such as feeling the need for change, communicating the vision and the importance of keeping communication active during all phases of the implementation process (Mento et al., 2002), (Cameron and Green, 2009, p. 115). The model should be used at the strategic level of organisations to change their vision and thence to achieve a comprehensive form of transformation (Pryor et al., 2008).

There are two significant lessons to be learned from Kotter's model: the process of change goes through several stages that take time; and major mistakes at any stage may cause devastating consequences for the momentum of the process (Mento et al., 2002), (Pryor et al., 2008).

Ten-step model (Jick, 1999)

Jick developed a tactical model to drive the implementation of major change in organisations. This model can be seen as a recipe that serves a change process or evaluates a change that is already emerging in the organisation (Mento et al., 2002), (Pryor et al., 2008). These commandments provide a useful blueprint for organisations that seek to change by following a 10-step list and to draw their own strategies for the implementation of the process of change (Jick, 1999).

The model understands change as a journey of discovery through thoughtful questions being asked in each phase (Mento et al., 2002). Jick states that "implementation is also a process of asking questions like these: Are we addressing the real needs of the company or taking the easy way out? How shared is the vision? How do we preserve anchors to the

past while moving to the future? Does everyone need to feel the same sense of urgency?" (Jick, 1999, p. 8). Questions are presented as helping the organisation to focus on being flexible, and to remind change leaders that the implementation of the change is a process of continuous discovery (Jick, 1999).

Seven-step model (Garvin, 2000)

This model follows the change concepts of Lewin (1947), unfreezing, movement and refreezing, as the main elements of the change process. The model focuses on the role of the change driver in establishing the urgency of the change, ensuring that employees understand the reasons for change, formulating and communicating the vision of change, making the change and developing a long-term plan, measuring the progress at all stages, and refreezing the change by altering or shifting systems and structures (Garvin, 2000, p. 131, Mento et al., 2002).

Twelve-step model (Mento et al., 2002)

Kezar (2001) suggest that the principles of various change models can be combined to develop a comprehensive model or a complex approach to change (p. 22). Based on the models (Kotter, 1995, Jick, 1999 and Garvin, 2000), Mento et al. (2002) have developed a comprehensive framework with twelve steps to help those who want to implement change processes in their organisations. Briefly, these steps are:

1. The idea and its context: determine the features of the current reality, what is your required change or development. Generate ideas using creative thinking and creative tension to enhance the desire to escape from reality.
2. Define the change initiative: analysis of the organisation's need to change, drawing tracks of change initiatives, identify the roles of the participants (planners, implementers, beneficiaries).
3. Evaluate the climate for change: analyse the state of the organisation in detail, identify strengths and weaknesses, and understand the organisation environment; review the history of success and failure in the change. All of these steps help to formulate an effective implementation plan.

4. Develop a change plan: formulate a plan in the light of clear objectives and provide accurate details about the responsibilities of main players (strategists, implementers, beneficiaries) in all levels of the organisation.
5. Find and cultivate a sponsor: a powerful sponsor has the ability to support change and lead the processes plus use their powers to influence the regulatory networks.
6. Prepare your target audience: understanding the views of the recipients is important at this stage in order to create support for the efforts of change and to deal with potential resistance.
7. Create the cultural fit – or, making the change last: change manager needs to consider the designs and organisational structures, the reward system, training and education, and systems development to help change growing in a supportive environment.
8. Develop and choose a change leadership team: the commander of the change plays a crucial role in creating a common vision adhered to by the team to support change efforts.
9. Create small wins for motivation: providing rewards constantly and celebrating the efforts of the team drives them to make further efforts.
10. Constantly and strategically communicate the change: communication with the beneficiaries from the beginning is very important in order to increase understanding and commitment and to reduce confusion and resistance.
11. Measure the progress of the change effort: implementers of the change need to make a great effort in assessing and evaluating the progress towards change.
12. Integrate lessons learned: experiences of change have many useful lessons that must be collected, reviewed and published, in order not to repeat mistakes again.

There are broadly similar characteristics across all change models as they follow the same route and make use of similar procedures. In general, the models provide guidance, including a series of process steps for the transition from one state to another. It is important to note that overlap between the steps can happen in all models. This is normal – change rarely goes in a straight line (Biech, 2007, pp. 25, 28).

S/N	Three steps model (Lewin, 1947)	Eight phases model (Kotter, 1995)	Ten steps model (Jick, 1999)	Seven steps model (Garvin, 2000)	Twelve steps model (Mento et al., 2002)
1	Freezing	Establish a sense of urgency	Analyse the organisation and its need for change	Leading change	The idea and its context
2	Moving	Forming a powerful guiding coalition	Create a shared vision and common direction	Creating a shared need	Define the change initiative
3	Refreezing	Creating a vision	Separate from the past	Shaping a vision	Evaluate the climate for change
4		Communicating the vision	Create a sense of urgency	Mobilizing commitment	Develop a change plan
5		Empowerment of others to act on the vision	Support a strong leader role	Making change last	Find and cultivate a sponsor
6		Planning for and creating short-term wins	Line up political sponsorship	Monitoring progress	Prepare your target audience
7		Consolidating improvements and producing still more change	Craft an implementation plan	Change systems and structure	Create the cultural fit - Making the change last
8		Institutionalizing new approaches	Develop enabling structures		Develop and choose a change leader team
9			Communicate, involve people, and be honest		Create small wins for motivation
10			Reinforce and institutionalise the culture		Constantly and strategically
11					Measure progress of the change effort
12					Integrate lessons learned

Table 3. 1 Models of Change

3.5.3 Strategies of Change

A strategy is "the direction and scope of an organisation over long-term, which achieves advantage in changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholders' expectations" (Johnson et al., 2008, p.3). Multiple issues need to be considered before the selection and application of any change strategy. Nickols (2010) indicates that seven issues might influence the selection of a strategy: the degree of change (radical or less radical), the degree of resistance, the number and diversity of stakeholders, types of risks, time required for the change, availability of change experience and dependency (the relationship between the organisation and employees).

Roberto and Levesque (2005) suggest "the seed of effective change must be planted by embedding procedural and behavioral changes in an organisation long before the initiative is launched."

Kezar and Eckel (2002) conducted a study based on a case study of six HEIs in the USA, to ground a transformational change process both theoretically and empirically. They identified the following core strategies to facilitate the process of change initiatives:

1. Senior management support reflects positively on the financial support initiatives, incentives and new structures to support change efforts. This makes employees feel appreciated and helps them to look favorably on improvements to administrative processes and to ensure the best decisions.
2. The existence of a collaborative and shared leadership that includes senior staff and others contributes in creating communication channels with stakeholders through seminars, training programmes and sessions in which open debate can take place. All of this helps to encourage individuals to participate in the processes of change.
3. Leaders need to develop a robust design of a future that makes change desirable by setting goals and drawing a flexible plan to achieve that future.
4. Staff development is essential to provide staff with knowledge and leadership skills, which will help them to communicate effectively in carrying out the required changes.

5. The visible implementation of action steps is important because it highlights the results of hard work and effort, which enhances the feeling of the new sense resulting from change and maintains momentum.

Nickols (2010) has concluded that no single change strategy is the best. Leaders and managers of change need to examine each change initiative to find out what strategy can serve their efforts, and then adopt one strategy, multiple strategies or a mix of strategies and tactics.

3.6 The Roles of Leaders and Managers in Change

There is ambiguity in the literature about the terms "change leadership" and "change management" with some writers using them interchangeably. However, Kotter (2011) argues that there is a significant distinction between these terms. Change management is a collection of essential tools and organisational structures designed to keep the change efforts under control, reducing potential distractions caused by the process of change, while change leadership focuses on leading change forces, visions and pushing the process of change as a whole so that it is faster, more intelligent and has higher efficiency. From another angle, Moran and Brightman (2000) define change management as "the process of continually renewing an organisation's direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers" (p. 66). Regardless of the terminology, the management or leadership of the change process has a heavy responsibility and must carry out important roles to achieve sustainable success.

The style of management behaviour is one significant factor for succeeding in the implementation of organisational change initiatives (Mullins, 2006). It has a crucial role in the identification and assessment of the surrounding circumstances that help to formulate appropriate strategies and structures to tackle change issues and improve an organisation's performance (Pettigrew, 1985). Bush and Coleman (2000) have asserted that good management makes an obvious difference in the quality of educational organisations and students' results (p. 3).

The role of a change director must be noticeable and active in all stages of a change processes (Hiatt and Creasey, 2012, p. 34). In their book, Cameron and Green (2009) have suggested that there are five roles that can be played by the director of change, taking into

account the flexibility of use, diversity, performance and that there is no one right way. These roles are:

1. The edgy catalyser: focuses on creating a discomforting atmosphere in the current situation to stimulate change.
2. The visionary motivator: concentrates on involvement and providing support and incentives to motivate individuals.
3. The measured connector: feels the sense of the goal and opens channels of communication throughout the organisation to make change a real phenomenon.
4. The tenacious implementer: to achieve the required results this person focuses on project planning, deadlines for completion and progress.
5. The thoughtful architect: looks carefully at frameworks and designs and combines strategies and concepts to build a strong base to ensure change (pp. 343–345).

Figure 3. 1 Summary of the five leadership roles (Cameron and Green, 2009, p. 344)

As has been discussed in section 3.4, resistance can be one of the vast number of reasons for change failure. Leaders and managers play significant roles in dealing with both low levels of participation or high levels of resistance. Mullins (2006) argues:

> In certain situations, and with certain members of staff, it may be necessary for management to make use of hierarchical authority and to attempt to impose change through a coercive, autocratic style of behavior. (p. 510).

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), assert that many managers do not pay attention to the adequacy of the reaction of individuals to change and the ways in which they can have a positive impact on individuals and groups. The reason for this may be the lack of understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of familiar ways.

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), furthermore stress the importance of continued efforts, the choice of an appropriate strategy to overcome resistance by looking at the amount and type of resistance, the positions of resisters and supporters, the information available to design the change and the energy available for its implementation, and, finally, the potential risks. In addition, they highlight six ways change leaders, mangers or agents can deal with resistance. These are described briefly in the following table 3.2, with consideration of the situations in which they can be used plus their advantages and disadvantages.

Method	Commonly used in situations	Advantages	Disadvantages
Education and communication	Where there is a lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis	Once persuaded, people will often help with the implementation of the change	Can be very time consuming if lots of people are involved
Participation and involvement	Where the initiators do not have all the information they need to design the change, and where others have considerable power to resist	People who participate will be committed to implementing change, and any relevant information they have will be integrated into the change plan	Can be very time consuming if participators design an inappropriate change
Facilitation and support	Where people are resisting because of adjustment problems	No other approach works as well with adjustment problems	Can be time consuming, expensive, and still can fail
Negotiation and agreement	Where someone or some group will clearly lose out as a result of a change, and where that group has considerable power to resist	Sometimes it is a relatively easy way to avoid major resistance	Can be too expensive in many cases if it prompts others to negotiate for compliance
Manipulation and co-optation	Where other tactics will not work or are too expensive	It can be a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to resistance problems	Can lead to future problems if people feel manipulated
Explicit and implicit coercion	Where speed is essential and the change initiators possess considerable power	It is speedy and can overcome any kind of resistance	Can be risky if it leaves people angry at the initiators

Table 3. 2 Methods for dealing with resistance to change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008, p.136)

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) point out that one of the most common errors among leaders of change, when dealing with resistance, is using one method to tackle all kinds of resistance types and using the method separately and not as part of an overall strategy for the change.

3.7 Keys for Successful Change

The literature in the field of change in organisations is rich; there are a significant range of tips, lessons, principles and guides that discuss appropriate steps to ensure success. Change planners should be aware that this wisdom may not succeed in all cases; it depends on the culture of the organisation, staff qualifications and the economic and political conditions in the society. This section reviews approaches advocated by scholars and researchers, from various backgrounds and several disciplines, regarding achieving successful change.

Based on Prosci (2012) research studies involving more than 650 firms, Hiatt and Creasey (2012. p.8) identified the biggest contributors to achieving success in projects of change in organisations. These are :

1. Effective, active, visible and continued support from top management.
2. Open channels of communication and the continuance of broadcasting messages about the reasons for the change, its objectives and its implication.
3. Adopting an appropriate management approach to the project of change.
4. Continued support from "change agents" within the organisational hierarchies, and the staff at the front line, ensures the continuity of change movement within all departments.
5. Increasing staff participation through activities, communication, listening to feedback and participation in decision-making.
6. Support from middle management that has sufficient change management skills, helps to ensure the continuity of positive communication with staff.

Based on Kotter's (1995) model of change, Harris et al. (2003) studied five medical schools involved in projects of change. They found that the factors that most help to gain support from faculty members to change processes are: the involvement of department heads; extensive inclusion practices; networking; and, lastly, identifying supporters within the school to foster the change. In addition, the study identified the most prominent factors associated with sustaining the change: continuing education and evaluation; visible continued support from senior leadership; recognition of individual efforts and achievements and providing the required resources.

The organisational culture should be taken into account when planning for change, not only because it plays a crucial role in the implementation of change activities in terms of acceptance or rejection, but because the chances of success depend on it (Kiritsis, 2009). Aguirre and Alpern (2014) developed ten guiding tips that can be adapted by leaders for use in many cases of change in organisations. These principles stressed the importance of taking advantage of the culture of individuals, the organisation and the community by linking them to the goals of change. This approach will help to create emotional energy to support the project of change.

1. Understanding staff culture and behaviour and then investing them as emotional energy to support the change project by linking the current culture with change components.
2. Successful change initiatives start from the top. It is important that senior management and all managers agree on the vision and goals and are committed throughout the process of change.
3. Ensure the participation of all the layers in the organisation, especially those in the front lines, because they discover important information about glitches in the implementation and watch customer responses to the change.
4. Link emotional and logical aspects together in the formulation of objectives to ensure adherence to the project of change.
5. Engagement in behaviours of change, visibly and daily by leaders, will make the staff believe that change is really happening.
6. Strong sustainable change requires constant communication at all stages.
7. Identify informal leaders respected by members of the organisation who can influence and engage them as participants and directors.
8. Activate official solutions to change the behaviour of individuals and convince them about change through support, training, restructuring and an incentive system.
9. Create ownership ethics at work by asking the staff at all levels of the organisation to be responsible for quality, celebrate improvements and appreciate achievements.
10. Measure success before moving on to new stages and support change by continuous assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses.

The literature suggests that the success of change initiatives depends largely on the impact of faculty through the implementation processes. Therefore it is important to pay attention to human factors and understand the culture of the academic community (Storberg-Walker

and Torraco, 2004). In addition, each university has different factors and a unique context that requires an appropriate framework or paradigm of management in order to achieve positive change. Scott (2004) advocates the following nine-change management lessons be addressed appropriately and effectively in HEIs (pp. 4–7):

1. It is impossible to address every relevant change idea that occurs.
2. Change is a learning process not an event, and the enthusiasm of key stakeholders regarding engaging in and sticking with it, is vital for a successful implementation.
3. The university culture has a powerful influence on motivation.
4. A change activity in one sector of a university typically leads to a need for change in another sector.
5. Success in a change project results from a team effort.
6. It is necessary to concentrate – at the same time – on the present and the future.
7. Change is a cyclical not a linear process.
8. There is a need to look inside and outside for effective change solutions.
9. Change is always happening, but it must be led.

Carnall (1999) supports a view that the implementation of change is difficult and time is required for people to accept a mental change and a change in culture. The change depends on behaviour and directing individuals to carry out new roles makes them behave in different ways; they are trained and encouraged, this will affect the culture of the organisation (p. 3). To transform individuals from resisters to being supporters one must make them involved and committed. In order to strengthen involvement and commitment Coetsee (1999) identified five elements: (1) knowledge – providing staff training and development; (2) information – how it is disseminated and how staff understand and accept it; (3) empowerment – giving staff the power to participate in making decisions; (4) rewards and recognition – giving moral and financial incentives; (5) shared visions – sharing goals and values clearly and in a convincing manner.

Change in educational organisations may be imposed from outside or it can be a result of an internal evaluation. In any case, it needs effective management. Leaders and managers are required to create a suitable climate for change and to design structures and processes that enable new ideas to be tested and applied. They also need to be able to set priorities and deal with new initiatives (Bush and Coleman, 2000, p. 77). In addition, Newman

(2006) stressed that the successful implementation of change processes requires a focus on the behaviour of leaders and teamwork and the engagement of all layers of an organisation, from top to bottom.

At the end of this section, it can be concluded that change in an organisation requires time (often more than expected) to enhance a deep emotional and well-established cultural atmosphere that supports such an initiative. Each organisation has its own culture, and each case of change has specific circumstances, therefore it is important to choose effective management models to manage the change and linked resources. Opening communication with all stakeholders involved, inside or outside the organisation, is an urgent need in order to ensure the spread of the change message and increase acceptance and support. Enhancing the sense of responsibility among individuals will help to increase involvement, commitment and integrity. Providing rewards and appreciation for the efforts and achievements of individuals and teams promotes continuity in supporting a change initiative. Finally, it is necessary to carry out ongoing evaluation of change processes and take advantage of feedback in order to repair errors and achieve success quickly.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has discussed the issue of change in public organisations, with a focus on the HE sector. It provides a comprehensive picture of the change theory, through a definition and review of concepts and models, in order to understand the triggers of change, change objectives and the challenges that usually accrue within the implementation process.

This chapter also presented a number of models, strategies and lessons that may help in the planning and implementation of the change process efficiently and flexibly, and in dealing with potential challenges. The review leads us to the conclusion that there is no strategy or model that is effective in all times and places. All strategies and models support the improvement of the process of change implementation and seek to make it sustainable. The preference in the selection of any one model or strategy is influenced by several conditions, such as the objectives of the change, its type and the available time and resources. It is vital to emphasise the importance of the organisational culture, which is a crucial factor in the selection of the appropriate model or strategy. Theoretical models and strategies may not always work as each organisation has its own culture, needs and environment in which they operate. Change leaders can follow one of the strategies or

models or use them to develop a new method suitable for the objective of the change initiative.

Following from the discussion above, change in HE is a reality that cannot be avoided, and in many cases, it is necessary. Currently, QA is perceived as a fundamental phenomenon in HEIs: it is influencing decisive changes in educational administration policies and the procedures of academic work. Hence, in order to fulfil the study's aim of proposing a framework to enhance the operation of QA in HE, the review of the change issue, the driving forces and the issues of change management, its factors for success and failure required significant introduction to build a clear understanding of the change trends that are leading QA in HE and to explore how contemporary trends have influenced the recent development in Saudi Arabian HE.

The following section will examine the issue of QA in HEIs from several perspectives in order understand the dimensions of this phenomenon and achieve the objectives of this study.

Chapter 4: Quality Assurance in Higher Education

4.1 Introduction

Globally across HE there is a trend towards accountability linked to examination and/or other mechanisms of external assessment (Bush and Coleman, 2000, p. 77). There is a detectible range of initiatives around the world concerned with QA and partnerships at the national level with the ambition to enhance and develop systems of QA. One dimension of globalisation of HE that has emerged is that of the globalisation of accreditation and QA systems. Although such mechanisms and ideas are not new, there is a new importance to and growing awareness of the need to raise the quality of academic processes and the outcomes of HE systems (Martin and Stella, 2007, pp. 25-26).

In addition, HEIs are seeking to increase their innovative ability and quality of education to meet the needs of society and the requirements of economic competition. Change has become the primary means to bring about the desired quality and to develop new systems; contributing to the reform of traditional university management systems. Universities have sought to apply modern systems to be able to compete and engage in the race for excellence and to meet the requirements of society and the labour market (Alhadi, 2013).

This chapter explores the development of various concepts of quality and QA, and the main QA mechanisms of HE. It discusses critical issues surround stakeholders' engagement and the challenges related to the operation of QA in HE. With particular focus on KSA, it reviews the efforts of the Gulf States to enhance QA in order to draw a clearer picture of the research context. The chapter concludes with a summary of the keys to success in the operation of QA in HE that are drawn from literature and previous studies in this field.

4.2 Quality: General Background

Attention to quality has existed since ancient human civilisations; it is a synonym of precision and perfection. Interest in the term ‘quality’ in contemporary administrative thought began in the early twentieth century and the industrial revolution played a significant role in the development of the modern concept and philosophy of this term. The quality concepts that are common in HE originated from the thought and practices of the business sector (Srikanthan, 1999). The progress made in the field of quality and productivity in organisations is attributed to efforts made by a number of pioneers. They

proposed techniques to improve quality standards and contributed to the formulation of quality philosophies and principles. There are many well-known quality gurus. The focus here will be on the efforts of W. Edward Deming, Joseph M. Juran and Philip Crosby (Mahadevan, 2009). The literature often refers to the labours of these three pioneers and their philosophies as the basis for a number of established quality concepts and systems.

Deming believed that quality is everyone's business, and that all members of an organisation should contribute to customer satisfaction. He emphasised that quality improvement is the right way to increase efficiency and reduce cost. Deming developed a successful model of quality improvement and management: Plan, Do, Check and Act (known as the PDCA cycle). In addition, he proposed 14 principles to help organisations of any size and type to stay in business and to protect their stakeholders (Deming, 1991, Mahadevan, 2009, p. 108). (See Table 4.1)

Juran defined quality simply as fitness for use or purpose. He believed that management is largely responsible for quality, and that quality can be improved only if the improvement is planned. Objectives and plans should be specific and measurable, training is also necessary and starts from the top. Managing for quality from Juran's perspective requires a focus on three operations, known as the 'Juran Trilogy': quality planning, quality control and quality improvement. For continuous quality improvement Juran proposed 10 steps (Juran and Godfrey, 1999, p. 5, Beckford, 2002, pp. 106-115). (See Table 4.1)

Crosby is another quality guru who believed quality is free. From his perspective, the absolutes of quality are "quality means conformance not elegance, there is no such thing as a quality problem, it is always cheaper to do the job right the first time, the only performance measurement is the cost of quality, the only performance standard is Zero Defects" (Crosby, 1979, p. 131). In addition, Crosby proposed a programme of 14 steps of quality improvement (See Table 4.1).

In the decades from the 1980s, based on the above philosophies and others, a major global development occurred regarding models and systems to manage, control, assess, ensure and improve quality in all sectors. Quality systems operating widely today in HE include: total quality management (TQM), the European Framework for Quality Management (EFQM), the Excellence Model, balanced scorecards, the Malcolm Baldrige Award, ISO

9000 Series, business process re-engineering (BPR), the SERVQUAL model, QA and accreditation (Becket and Brookes, 2008).

Developers	Principles
Deming's 14 Points for Management Improvement (Deming, 1991, pp. 23-24)	1. Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service 2. Adopt the new philosophy 3. Cease dependence on mass inspection 4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone 5. Improve constantly and indefinitely the system of production and service 6. Institute training 7. Adopt and institute leadership 8. Drive out fear 9. Break down barriers between staff areas 10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations and targets for the workforce 11. Eliminate numerical quotas for the workforce and numerical goals for people in management 12. Remove barriers that rob people of pride in workmanship 13. Encourage education and self-improvement for everyone 14. Take action to accomplish the transformation
Juran's 10 Steps to Quality Improvement (Beckford, 2002, pp. 111)	1. Build awareness of opportunities to improve 2. Set-goals for improvement 3. Organise to reach goals 4. Provide training 5. Carry out projects to solve problems 6. Report progress 7. Give recognition 8. Communicate results 9. Keep score 10. Maintain momentum by making annual improvement part of the regular systems and processes of the company
Crosby's 14 Steps to Quality Improvement (Crosby, 1979, pp. 132-139)	1. Management commitment 2. Quality improvement team 3. Quality measurement 4. Cost of quality evaluation 5. Quality awareness 6. Corrective action 7. Establish an ad hoc committee for the zero defects programme 8. Supervisor training 9. Zero defects day 10. Goal setting 11. Remove causes of error 12. Recognition 13. Quality councils 14. Do it over again

Table 4. 1 Quality Improvement Principles

Total Quality Management (TQM) has made a notable contribution to enhancing development theories and in demonstrating how several management theories can be integrated together to work in harmony for organizational excellence. The credibility of TQM philosophy has been demonstrated in many countries, in that competitive advantages can be created and continued by fulfilment through the adoption of TQM (Feigenbaum and Feigenbaum, 1999; Mohamed, 2013). International organisations have witnessed a comprehensive development that began with embarking on a journey of transformation towards TQM. This is coupled with its spread, from the manufacturing to the service sector, and on to public services. TQM became an ever-evolving approach of doing business in order to develop methods and processes which cannot be imitated by competitors (Dale, 2003). For example, Japan dominated the world's economy for over 50 years, but the United States regained its competitive position by encouraging the adoption of TQM in the private sector and government public sector (Feigenbaum and Feigenbaum, 1999; Mohamed, 2013).

Dale (2003) defined TQM simply as the "mutual co-operation in an organization and associated business processes to produce value-for-money products and services which meet and hopefully exceed the needs and expectations of customers" (p.3-4). Establishing quality in education is important since the major stakeholders are humans. It is assumed that HE quality helps support and shapes the continuous wealth of societies. Education has an impact on social evolution that can lead to advancement in social life. Many countries have achieved great improvements from the quality of HE, through producing qualified specialists to lead the country in the future. Ideally HE has to be about quality and excellence, it then becomes necessary to continually enhance quality through implementing TQM (Abdulaziz et al., 2016). Sallis (2002) agrees that TQM can assist institutions in managing change and setting their own programs for dealing with new external pressures. In addition, there are those in the education sector who believe that TQM can achieve a full transformation. However, this is not the case, TQM cannot bring results overnight; neither is it a solution for all the problems that face education. Rather, it is a productive set of tools that can be used in the management of educational institutions.

Regarding the applicability and fitness of TQM in HE, Yadollah and Massoud (2010) debated that in many cases the current evidence of application of TQM is not compatible with the assumed criteria. Most current quality systems are not collectively acceptable, they do not follow a clear philosophy and theory and do not show the productivity or

progression of institutions. Individually however, there are some successes applied in non-academic HEIs. It is argued that the philosophies of quality management systems are not "value free" within HEI management systems, therefore without a determined quality philosophy driving them, it must be acknowledged that the frameworks of quality systems operate in different cultures and languages. Thus there is no cohesion. Despite this, they all attempt to disseminate quality management practices and share a set of fundamental philosophies which include:

> … acceptance of responsibility for quality by the top management; customer orientation; high level of employee participation; open and effective communication; fact-based management; and strategic quality planning. (Yadollah and Massoud, 2010, p.184).

Harvey (1995) suggested that the problems facing the implementation of TQM in HE relate to the narrow scope of the definitions of 'quality'; determining the product and identifying customers; defining the objectives of the institution; measuring and controlling the processes of learning and exploring the role of students in learning. According to Barlosky and Laughton (1995), there are four quality imperatives that organisations must face on the way to proactivity in terms of issues of quality. Sallis (2002) lists these as: "the moral imperative; the professional imperative; the competitive imperative; and the accountability imperative" (p.3). Some management specialists believe that TQM is associated with the manufacturing field but not with human beings. They argue that education and manufacturing are two completely different fields. Nonetheless, there is increasing willingness to investigate the possibility that valuable lessons may be learnt from industrial management practices. An educational institution can effectively practise TQM as it can support and ensure that TQM becomes the core approach and common practice in its environment (Sallis, 2002). Harvey (1995) outlined several main advantages of TQM for HE, including the engagement of staff in improving the work environment; a clearer vision of the organisation's future and the individual's role in this; taking responsibility in accounting for the services the organisation provides; learning about stakeholders' expectations and needs; improving morale and attitudes; building fact-based decisions; and enhancing teamwork skills to solve problems.

Currently, the Saudi government is increasingly seeking accountability for the quality of services provided to the public through importing and implementing new management

systems, such as TQM. Alruwaili (2013) however emphasises that the translation and implementation of TQM in the Saudi context requires careful local consideration of different environments and requirements. This means that TQM must be refined to fit the Saudi context. Moving towards a successful reform of implementation would need careful consideration of which adaptations are appropriate and more effective, how TQM can be reconciled with a complex administration structure and the challenging conditions of the country. As QA is the focus of this research, it is worth highlighting the relationship between QA and TQM. QA and TQM are both aimed at promoting excellence. However, while QA is a process that involves building and maintaining the infrastructure and systems essential to consistently safeguard the delivery of good quality products and services, TQM is a long-standing approach aimed at managing an organisation, and implementing thoughtful, well-integrated systems, at all levels. It can be argued that QA is an indispensable part of TQM (Gartenstein, 2017).

4.3 Quality reflects Islamic Values

Islam is a religion that calls for quality and mastery in work because this ensures the rights and meets the interests of both individuals and societies. Islam considers quality and excellence in work to be a great religious value and a very important component of human behaviour (Hassan, 2012, p. 9). Muslims believe that all good works, small or large, of any kind must be performed perfectly and with high quality in order to be acceptable to Allah "God" (Al-Hussein, 2013). Al-Tuwaijri (2012) highlights that the concept of quality is an intrinsic value of Islam that must be adhered to for leadership and excellence (p. 186).

Quality concepts are mentioned in the holy book (the Quran) in multiple terms, such as "Al-Ihsan and Al-Itqan," which mean provisions to work accurately and in a set manner, in order to improve the quality of humanitarian conditions, and/or raise the level of human effectiveness (Omar et al., 2008, p. 295). Allah says in Surat al-Baqarah verse 195, *"Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good"* (International, 2012, p. 28). In addition, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that *"Verily, Allah loves anyone of you who has done a work with perfection and mastery"* (Albani, 1988, No.1880). Hassan (2012) defined quality from an Islamic perspective as good work performance and proficiency in accordance with high accuracy and precision of the criteria to ensure work reaches the extreme degrees of perfection in order to achieve the satisfaction of Allah, and to bring happiness to human beings in this life and in the afterlife (p. 16).

Islam affirms a number of essential principles for the success of any system of quality and QA, including: teamwork, exchange of views and "Shura" (consultation), control and accountability, continuous improvement, incentives, constant assessment, the distribution of roles and delegation, wise leadership, satisfaction of stakeholders, prevention, renewal and change (Hassan, 2012, pp. 17-37).

Religion can be an influential factor in guiding the behaviour of individuals in the communities in which religion is a system of life and a source of legislation, such as in KSA. Islamic law exhorts Muslims to perform good work perfectly in all work types and levels and in public life, whatever their roles. Hambler (2015) argues that "religious employees, particularly those sufficiently committed to their beliefs that they want to manifest them overtly at work, are, or ought to be, amongst the most committed or 'virtuous' employees, as they are working not simply for their managers but also for God" (p. 18). Therefore, it is likely that the confirmation of Islam on the concept of quality and workmanship at work can be meaningful in motivating employees to adopt quality procedures, QA and ways to improve work performance.

4.4 The Concepts of Quality in Higher Education

The literature on the field of quality and QA reveals the existence of difficulties in defining some of the key terminology. This ambiguity is unsurprising as quality is related to a number of complex concepts. "Many see quality as a relative concept, meaningful only from the perspective of particular judges at particular points of time, measured against some either explicit or implicit standard or purpose" (Harman, 1996, pp. 3-4).

Harvey and Knight (1996) argue that a number of different concepts of quality are used widely in the field of education and these concepts need to be assessed in the light of the rationale of change and the purpose of the HE (p. 1). In regard to thinking about quality Harvey and Green (1993) grouped quality conceptualisations into five separate but interrelated positions (pp. 11–27):

1. In education, quality can be seen as an exceptional idea. In relation to this view there are three concepts. There is the understanding of quality as distinctive. There is the view that it exceeds high standards and, thirdly, it is seen as a weaker concept in passing a set of minimum standards.

2. Education quality can be understood in terms of consistency. It concerns the process and set of specifications that aim to meet perfectly through two approaches: zero defects and a quality culture.
3. The third approach to quality relates to the purpose of the product or service. This focuses on three issues: meeting the customer's requirements, mission-based fitness for purpose and stakeholders' satisfaction.
4. From a populist viewpoint, quality means value for money by focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, including taking into account accountability and performance indicators.
5. Finally, the notion of transformation sees quality in terms of change from one state to another. As education is continuous and participative there are two components of transformative quality: enhancing participation and giving power to stakeholders to affect their own change.

From another perspective, Scott (1994) argued that several factors cause difficulty in achieving an agreed definition of quality in the academic arena. Scott identified five concepts of quality in academic education (pp. 62–67):

Quality as Excellence

This is the most common definition in HE. It perceives quality through a fixed hierarchy of relative merits. However, Scott underlines some drawbacks to this concept. "First, it regards the definition of quality as unproblematic," an assumption that is hard to maintain in a mass system. Second, "its main delivery mechanism, peer review, assumes a professional collegiality as well as shared intellectual values, neither of which can be taken for granted in an increasingly competitive and market-oriented system."

Quality as Audit

This approach focuses on what procedures universities use to "safeguard and maintain quality" through accuracy of accounts and recommending improvements, but without questioning priorities and strategy. As the approach is modelled on the "closed analytical style" applied in the world of firms, it is "difficult to reconcile with the open interpretative ethos of universities."

Quality as Outcomes

This perspective concentrates on outcomes. The assumption is the quality of inputs and the process means successful HE outcomes. Scott has pointed out that this approach faces some difficulties. It fails to link outputs to inputs; it ignores the “value added” issues, which are important when measuring the effectiveness of HE. It further fails to define “successful” outcomes in satisfactory way. The last problem is that some outcomes, particularly in HE, require a long time to become clear, “which undermines the usefulness of this approach in policy and managerial terms.”

Quality as Mission

This concept stresses the need for assessing quality based on the context of the mission. It assumes that small HEIs should not be judged by the same standards as large institutions. The description of this conception is "fitness for purpose." This label was employed around the middle of the 1980s, to discourage “policy makers from judging the former polytechnics by inappropriate criteria designed with traditional universities in mind” (Scott, 1994, p. 66). Scott points out two objections to the idea of quality as a mission conception. First, there is a possibility that institutions will choose the standards against which their performance will be assessed. Second, it is likely that any results of an assessment of "fitness for purpose" will be impossible to measure.

Quality as Culture

The last concept emphasises the need to establish a "quality culture", which should penetrate the HE institution in full, rather than the development of criteria to evaluate the quality of each individual process separately. Harvey (2008) argues that there is a lack of clarity around what a culture of quality is, and if it is a process for QA or a result of QA or such iterative process. Nevertheless, Harvey (2007) has outlined the main features of quality culture as: the academic ownership and participation; clarity of objectives; centrality of students in education and their participation in evaluation processes; enhancing staff cooperation and focusing on teamwork; inspiring leadership; acceptance of external review; continuous self-reflection and a willingness to improve and initiate, whatever the circumstances.

There are many other conceptions of quality, which can be described from various perspectives, such as "informal and formal modes", "top-down", "bottom-up", "monitor

processes systems" and "substantial outcomes measurements". These approaches can be “mixed-and-matched”, and they are not “mutually exclusive” (Scott, 1994, p. 67).

4.5 The Concept of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

When the concept of quality is applied in HEIs it tends to be associated with all components of the system. A quality system is associated, for example, with the level of student achievement, human resources, buildings and equipment, administrative processes and the requirements of stakeholders. Quality assurance is a set of assessment and evaluation processes and follow-up procedures for ensuring that the required level of quality is being maintained (Bandary, 2005). Harvey (2008) has defined QA in HE as "a mechanism for ensuring an appropriate learning process; be it a degree of control over what is permitted as a higher education experience, ensuring that the institution complies with basic requirements, or is accountable to its stakeholders, including funders and students, or has processes in place to enhance the learning process" (p. 80). The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in HE has a more comprehensive definition:

> Quality assurance may relate to a program, an institution or a whole HE system. In each case, QA is all those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures, which through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each program. Quality assurance extends to making the process and standards known to the educational community and the public at large (Lenn, 2004, p. 3).

Harvey (2006) argues that quality as a concept is distinct from QA mechanisms and processes. Harvey states: "Quality assurance is about checking the quality of a process or outcomes. Purposes of QA include compliance, control, accountability and improvement: quality is the conceptual tool through which these purposes are implemented. Implementation is via the QA methodology" (p. 2). Over the past two decades, and possibly longer, there has been a significant growth in interest in issues relating to the quality of the HE area. Many countries have supported this trend through the enactment of new policies and procedures for review, audit, evaluation and producing transparent reporting. These changes are associated with governments granting HEIs expanded autonomy, but with increasing requirements for accountability in the exercise of their

powers. On the other hand, this trend is associated with increasing globalisation, and the presence of a desire to develop benchmarking standards for quality in HE at national and international levels (Land and Gordon, 2013a). The link between quality and QA in HEIs has become significant and has been established across the world. The importance of QA lies in helping governments to monitor developments in the education arena and to verify standards. Internal practices and processes of QA contribute to achieving a number of stakeholders' objectives, for example: ensuring academic standards, accountability, confidence and satisfaction of stakeholders, credibility, reputation and good social standing (San and Kong, 2012).

4.6 Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Context

In many countries across the world there is a firm belief that HE can and must play a leading role in economic growth across all sectors of industry and services and in developing public policy. Harman views quality, relevance, and flexibility as the main attributes of HE in the present socioeconomic context (Harman, 1994). Higher education institutions represent the apex of the educational pyramid in global education systems and play three major roles: teaching, research and community service. These functions have a clear potential to impact on the progress and prosperity of nations. In light of rapid global changes and developments affecting all aspects of contemporary life it has become incumbent on the institutions of HE to fulfill their eminent place in the education sector through the provision of highly qualified graduates able to meet the requirements of society and the labour market. In the early nineties, a clear interest in the field of QA in HE emerged (Cullen et al., 2003). Quality assurance concepts and processes became areas of great concern among most of the internationally focused institutions of HE seeking to operate at the highest levels of the global field and to respond to contemporary trends, both locally and globally (Morley, 2003, San and Kong, 2012, Mansouri, 2012). In the turn to QA, a number of key challenges to the successful operation of QA in HE have been identified (Newton, 2010). For instance, the imposition of higher levels of stress on staff (Deem, 1998), leading to staff resistance (Kiritsis, 2009), increasing bureaucracy and control (Stensaker et al., 2011), the complexity of QAPs, and obtaining data to serve QAPs (Sanyal and Martin, 2007, Alhkaimi, 2012), a lack of qualified staff (Al-Hakim, 2012). These concerns and other challenges will be discussed in detail in section 4.11 of this chapter.

The use of quality systems has become established as an important strategic means towards achieving global competitive advantage. Regardless of the ways in which organisations pursue their journey towards quality, this approach contributes to providing forms of leverage to achieve world-class standards (Izadi et al., 1996). Harman (1994) quotes David Kemp, the Commonwealth Shadow Minister for Education:

> Education has to be about excellence ... If it is not about quality, then all our effort, all our expenditure will have been for nothing because we will not only have blighted the lives of our students, but damaged our ability to compete and survive in a world which does not owe us a living. (p. 39).

There is a danger that the globalization of HE comprises a supranationalism that crosses boundaries and ignores local cultures and identities. There is rising concern emerging around the globalization of international accreditation. Commentators note that national accreditation systems will have to contend with the increasing movement of human capital, demands for recognition and accusations of cultural imperialism (Knight, 1997, Blight et al., 2002). The internationalization of HE is described as a process of interchange of HE between states, involving partnerships between nations, national systems, accreditation systems and organisations. Increasingly such partnerships become the basis of international education (Blight et al., 2002, Kim, 2009). American accreditors have started to assess international academic programs and institutions and give them recognition in the USA. It has been argued that American HE is viewed as sector leading. Today there is a growing interest in and motivation to understand the US system in order to obtain accreditation. However, it can be argued that it is undesirable for Americans to accredit academic institutions and programs in other countries (Altbach, 2003). Altbach (2003) advises that:

> Just as the world's military superpower needs to be careful about its overseas interventions, America as an academic superpower has a duty not to abuse its academic muscle around the world, even if this particular US "academic invasion" is welcomed abroad (p.5).

In the US, there are two types of agencies providing accreditation. Firstly, there are institutional accreditation agencies that evaluate and accredit entire educational institutions. Secondly, programme accreditation agencies evaluate and accredit academic

programmes. There are more than 50 such accrediting agencies in the US, including 11 that evaluate HEIs in their entirety and approximately 40 agencies that evaluate specific academic programmes (El-Khawas, 2001). As of 2011, five of the six regional accreditation agencies in the US accredited 32 institutions in 15 countries outside the US. The number of countries with US accreditation activity increases to 67 when programme accreditation is included (Blanco Ramirez, 2015). The system is self-financed by the academic institutions and programs seeking accreditation. This system is established in the United States and has built up decades of legitimacy and widespread acceptance by the public, academics, and government. The demand for and interest in obtaining US accreditation is growing and US accreditation agencies are seeking greater outreach (Altbach, 2003).

American accreditation reflects the history, norms, and values of the US system. Thus, accreditation in the US assumes the recognition of certain ideas about the US HE system. Although US accreditors might not require international institutions to follow the standards that prevail in the US, there is a potential for pressure towards "Americanization" (Altbach, 2003). Ewell (2008) observes that US accreditation is highly influential internationally. Altbach (2003) argues that American accreditation places great pressure on international HE institutions to be compatible with American patterns of curricula and organization, in order to meet the required standards. This may limit innovation and impose foreign cultural and societal standards on HEIs. Additionally, the cost of accreditation is expensive and international HE institutions need to pay this cost. The necessity to measure the quality and performance of academic systems is understandable as is attention to ranking systems for academic institutions and programs. Increasing attention is being given to international recognition as HEIs aggressively pursue student recruitment and look to expand overseas graduate placements. Altbach (2003) suggests "…the American experience can be studied as one model of accreditation, but it should not be exported in the long run as this is neither a service to those institutions currently clamouring for it nor a positive contribution from American accreditors" (p.7). Nevertheless, there are many international HEIs on their way to having US accreditation, and many more are considering pursuing this accreditation around the world. As the internationalization of quality systems is on the rise, international studies are needed to clarify QA issues and to understand the impact of the effects of the US accreditation system on education in different social, cultural and economic contexts. It is important that any conclusions drawn take into account national and local cultures and circumstances.

Unquestioningly adopting the standards and systems of the world's most powerful academic system is an undesirable idea since it limits the possibility for variety and growth. Alternatively, it is possible that a national accreditation system would be superior, for instance, in contexts such as the Arab countries (Altbach, 2003; Blanco Ramirez, 2015).

In developing countries, the continuing reforms and rapid expansion in the HE sector involve several common challenges. States face a tension in achieving a balance between the need to expand HE and ensuring the quality of the education provided. At the level of HEIs, finding or establishing an accurate and scientific ways of examining and measuring the quality of outputs and ensuring quality is a significant challenge. The upgrading of education quality is a prominent priority that is a concern across policy contexts (San and Kong, 2012). Lim (1999) has argued that the adoption of QAP in developing countries is useful even when the conditions for success are not available. Such adoption can make clear how disparate activities carried out within a university are linked in the service of a common issue, and how quality can be improved by adopting an integrated approach. Quality assurance processes provide focus and guidance for those involved in improving the quality of services. However, mechanisms should be developed and formulated in line with the conditions of developing countries. Procedures should be simple and expectations should be realistic in the light of the available resources (Lim, 1999).

Harvey (2008) points out that the main purposes of QAPs are accountability, compliance, control and improvement. Brennan and Shah (2000) argue that determination of the purpose of QA systems in HE may depend on several factors such as the size and circumstances of educational institutions and the political trends in regard to education. They outline ten purposes that quality agencies commonly refer to in their QAPs (pp. 31–32):

- To ensure accountability for the use of public funds
- To improve the quality of HE provision
- To inform funding decisions
- To inform students and employers
- To stimulate competitiveness within and between institutions
- To undertake a quality check on new (sometimes private) institutions
- To assign institutional status

- To support the transfer of authority between the state and the institutions
- To assist the mobility of students
- To make international comparisons

Deming (1991) stated that, "Quality should be aimed at the needs of the consumer, present and future" (p. 5). Lenn (2004) identified five groups of QA stakeholders: government, students, employers, funding organisations and HEIs. Each group can be understood as having specific requirements in respect to QA. (See Table 4.2)

Stockholders	Objectives
Governments	To define HE country-wide To assure quality HE for the citizenry To assure a quality labour force To determine which institutions and programmes receive public funding To accept into the civil service only those who have graduated from accredited institutions To determine which institutions receive research funding To generally use QA as a means of consumer protection
Students	To assist in selecting an institution for study To ensure transfer between accredited institutions To ensure admission at the graduate level in a different institution from that of undergraduate degree To assist in gaining employment, particularly in civil service and in the professions
Employers	To assure qualified employees
Funding organisation	To determine eligible institutions
Higher education institutions	To improve institutional information and data To enhance institutional planning To determine membership in certain organisations To facilitate transfer schemes To assure a qualified student body

Table 4. 2 Stakeholders of Quality Assurance (Lenn, 2004, p. 5)

Harman (1994) argues that quality initiatives have a significant long-term impact on educational administration systems in HE. They serve students by ensuring that the educational institutions are working hard to achieve satisfactory levels in all programmes, taking into account the feedback from stakeholders to make improvements. Governments also benefit from initiatives to achieve their desire to increase the productivity and efficiency of the HE sector.

4.7 Quality Assurance and Standards

The achievement of agreed standards is essential to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of manufactured commodities and provided services. In general, the word ‘standards’ refers to a certain level, minimum benchmark, expectations or achievements that determine the performance (San and Kong, 2012). Harvey has defined quality standards as "a sets of norms that, within the QAP, specify the expectations on providers and, indeed, the QA themselves" (Harvey, 2008, p. 80). In the context of HE, standards help to describe the agreed or satisfactory level of accomplishment or outcome, based on adopted specifications and the standards set by the stakeholders (San and Kong, 2012).

In analysing the functions of standards, Lueger and Vettori (2008) have classified standards into three types based on their role in an institution’s QA or/and quality improvement (pp. 12–13):

Standards as minimum thresholds: These types of standards represent the minimum level that can be a basis for a contribution to the achievement of quality and improvement in an institution. To achieve such standards requires two actions: firstly, to clarify what needs to be done to achieve the standard; and, secondly, how to carry out such requirements in order to achieve the standard.

Standards as broad objectives: These standards are mostly "output-oriented, defining certain outcome or performance-oriented objectives that should be achieved" (Lueger and Vettori, 2008 , p13), without the need identify or divide processes into explicit indicators. Normally there are no clear procedures for how to achieve the standards but there may be recommendations and guidelines for implementation.

Standards as descriptions of good practice: These types of standards usually consist of routines that receive wide acceptance because they have proven to be effective and acceptable, and, at some point, are announced as standards. Good practice standards orient towards procedures and focus on how to meet a specific objective. However, it can be difficult to call these standards into question. In addition, they are usually restricted to a specific context and can be hard to translate to another context.

4.8 Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Quality assurance is classified into two types: internal and external. Internal QA ensures that the HE institution or/and programme has policies and mechanisms to confirm the

achievement of objectives and standards. External QA is implemented by external institutions. The role of external institutions is to assess the operation of institutions and their programmes to verify that they meet objectives and standards. Quality assurance includes numerous instruments and practices. There are three main mechanisms: quality audits, quality assessments and accreditation processes (Lenn, 2004, Martin and Stella, 2007, p. 153). Quality agencies and HEIs tend to adopt the most appropriate mechanisms to their circumstances and apply them at the level of the institution or programmes, or both (Abdul-Jabbar, 2012).

Quality Audit

The first step in QAP starts with quality audit. The target is to check whether the institution or one of its sections, has a QA system with sufficient procedures. Audit processes are conducted by individuals who are not involved in the work under examination (Sanyal and Martin, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, Shore (2008) argues that "audit is not just a series of technical practices: it must also be understood as an idea, a process, and a set of management techniques" (p. 292).

Quality Assessment

In quality assessment, HE operations, services, and academic programmes are subject to evaluation. Quality assessment is conducted based on multiple measures, such as self-evaluation, external audit and the preparation of a comprehensive evaluation report. Assessment can include administrative as well as academic aspects and outcomes. It takes into account the context of the institution or section, target areas, the procedures used, the objectives and priorities of stakeholders (Sanyal and Martin, 2007, p. 6, Abdul-Jabbar, 2012).

Accreditation Processes

The emergence of the accountability movement in the West and its expansion of the economy to the HE sector in the eighties helped to spread academic accreditation. The accountability movement called for the development of effective systems of accountability for educational systems and outputs at all levels. Accountability requires a level of transparency from institutions; including identifying the purpose of the institution or establishment, collecting data on how the institution performs its functions and providing evidence that the institution achieves its objectives and expected outputs. Moreover, institutions often need to demonstrate how they benefit from data collected by

improvements in performance. Therefore, the accreditation serves two purposes: improving institutional performance and providing a mechanism for QA to indicate that the institution provides services within acceptable standards (Alhkaimi, 2012, Abdul-Jabbar, 2012).

The process of accreditation tends to involve some form of formal review body that reviews and grants recognition for a HE institution (Institutional Accreditation) or academic programme (Programme Accreditation) when they meet agreed minimum standards (Harvey, 2004, San and Kong, 2012). Accreditation characteristically involves a number of processes (Sanyal and Martin, 2007, p. 6). It usually goes through a four step process: the development of standards, self-evaluation, external review and accreditation decision (Lenn, 2004). Several consequences usually result from the decision at the institutional or programme level, which are related to the likelihood of the continuation of the institution or programme, financial policies and procedures, and the institution's reputation in the community (Fernández et al., 2008).

There is a close relation between academic accreditation and QA. Accreditation has become a central QA mechanism, the most widely used globally and the most useful for the purposes of development and capacity building (Lenn, 2004). It encourages HEIs to adopt self-improvement, plus adherence to high levels of quality, which helps to maintain academic integrity (Alhkaimi, 2012, Abdul-Jabbar, 2012). Accreditation is considered to be a key performance indicator in relation to the quality of HEIs and their programmes, demonstrates that they keep pace with scientific developments across the world and that the institutions are capable of meeting the needs of society and the labour market. Politicians and academics rely heavily on the adoption of academic accreditation as an instrument to identify strengths and aspects that need improvement and to achieve the education outcomes demanded of them (Alhkaimi, 2012).

Nichols and Nichols (2000) have described the work of academic accreditation associations as ensuring that educational institutions, or programmes subject to accreditation, have the following elements: a mission that is worthy of a claim to provide HE and objectives that are consistent with their mission. Secondly that the institution or programme has adequate resources to achieve their mission, and, thirdly, there is the availability of documentation in respect of students' achievement of educational objectives.

There should also be evidence that the institution or programme is able to continue to achieve the mission and objectives (pp. 11–12).

Alhkaimi (2012) summed up the beneficial impact provided by accreditation on HEIs as encouraging them to: develop a clear message, definine quality standards, adopt a quality system, update academic programmes, provide an internal and external review mechanism, build a culture of learning and, finally, provide clear mechanisms for accountability transparency. The disadvantages however are that work procedures can be complicated and subject to severe bureaucracy. There is also the possibility of power conflict between the leadership of universities and accreditation bodies, and the unethical practice of commodification and falsification of accreditation.

4.9 Stakeholders' Engagement in Quality Assurance Operations

In the recent past there has been considerable interest in the theoretical aspects of quality, its systems and definitions, which have for the most part been imported from the business sector into HE, without giving sufficient attention to the implementation effects and the nature of stakeholders' responses to quality mechanisms (Newton, 2010). A number of researchers have recently tended to move beyond theoretical aspects (for instance, policies, definitions). They share an intention to look at different perspectives through empirical studies about QA systems that actually operate in HEIs. This provides some understanding about quality, QA, and mechanisms used in practice. Thus, concern is growing regarding the nature of academics' responses to quality, how they engage in QA operations: do they adopt, take the initiative, or resist QAPs (Newton, 2010)?

One of the research objectives of this study is to consider the issue of engagement by academics together with challenges that may arise in the operation of QAP in HEIs in KSA. The previous chapter has discussed the engagement of stakeholders in a general project of change; this section discusses the main issues that have been raised in the literature surrounding academics' engagement in QA operations.

Morley (2003) stated that "Quality assurance depends heavily on the responsibilisation of every organisational member" (p. 48). Academics' conviction and support for quality values, approaches and processes are essential in order to ensure the quality of education activities, and to help to produce accurate assessment reports in respect of the quality of education at the individual and institutional level (Laughton, 2003).

The engagement of all stakeholders is seen as the key feature of quality enhancement and is linked strongly to motivation. The motivators may vary between different stakeholders even in one group (Land and Gordon, 2013b, p. 21). Quality assurance processes aim at a number of levels and groups in HEIs. Audit mechanisms, for example, target institutional leadership and units responsible for the development of the learning process and those engaged in administrative aspects; assessment and accreditation mechanisms target academic programmes and those engaged in learning processes (students and professors). Thus, it likely that each group view routines and processes of QA in different ways (Stensaker et al., 2011).

Academics have a significant role to play in QA operations; however, their responses to transformation can be complicated (Gallagher, 2014). While some consider quality as a trend of reform and rehabilitation, through QA mechanisms (Morley, 2003, p. 50), there are those who believe "quality assurance combines technical, bureaucratic and value elements in ways which give power to some and remove it from others" (Salter and Tapper, 2000, p. 66). Harvey (2007) has outlined that the most common complaint of stakeholders involved in QA mechanisms is that the quality operations involve more bureaucracy than is necessary; and that there is a lack of time to fulfil quality requirements. In addition, staff can consider quality to be one manifestation of control. Witte (2008), for example, found that a number of professors in German universities postponed the implementation of QAP due to their weak conviction, in the hope that the system might be abandoned before they had to implement them. In another study about academics' responses to QA mechanisms in some Australian universities, Anderson (2006) found the most common issue for academics that emerged in interviews was that QAPs imposed a heavy additional workload and, moreover, that they did not ensure quality in the true sense.

In a study that explored the perceptions of academics in HE in Portugal about quality assessment, on one QAPs, Cardoso et al. (2013) identified four factors that may affect the nature of academics' responses: gender, type of institution, disciplinary affiliation and experience. Several studies suggest that **gender** is an important factor in relation to participating in QA mechanisms, and that women are more committed to QA (Luke, 1997, Morley, 2005, Cardoso et al., 2013). Pirsig (1974) considers that "the notion of quality is deeply connected to caring" (as cited in Morley, 2005, p. 414). The concept of care reflects the nature of women's social care roles, in this sense; they support the QAP (Morley, 2005,

Cardoso et al., 2013). The other reason could be that women do not have the same level of power as men in the academic community, thus, for this reason, they may believe that QAPs, such as audits and assessments, may strengthen their rights and allow them to get more power (Luke, 1997). However, Ababneh (2014) found, in a study about academic accreditation in Jordanian universities, the level of conviction among male academics about the need to apply accreditation standards in their colleges was higher than that of females. This may be interpreted on the basis that male academics occupy more management positions, including administrative positions in quality units. In regard to **disciplinary affiliation**, Trowler and Becher (2001) argue that the way academics are involved in their fields is interesting, it forms the main feature of the culture of the discipline. Academics have a relatively stable performance in consideration of values, attitudes and social practices (p. 23). Cardoso et al.'s (2013) study has shown differences in academic agreement regarding QAP based on disciplinary affiliation: academics in the fields of medical and health sciences have higher agreement than academics in the fields of engineering and technology. The **type of institution** may also affect the perceptions of stakeholders regarding QAP (Cardoso et al., 2013). João Rosa et al. (2006), for example, found that perceptions of deans in new universities are more optimistic about quality procedures than deans in more ancient universities. In addition, new universities make greater efforts in the adoption and implementation of a variety of structures and methods for QA. Finally, the **experience** and the extent of engaging in quality activities is one of the factors that affect the perceptions of academics regarding QA.

Previous empirical studies in some developed and developing countries have identified several potential reasons why some academics are hostile to QAPs. They noted issues related to the distribution and exercise of power, differential understandings of the concept of quality, a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of QAPs, doubts in regard to reliance on quantitative measurement and a belief that QAPs are additional heavy and time-consuimng work (Anderson, 2006, Newton, 2002, Morley, 2003, Newton, 2000).

A study by Newton (2000) suggests that the implementation of QA policies is difficult and uneven, and faculty members respond in different ways to the policies and procedures used for QA. Academics with a heavy teaching and research workload do not accept change easily, nor the requirements of QA mechanisms. Stensaker et al. (2011) found that there is a difference in perceptions between academics and institutional leaders: with leaders having more positive perceptions than other stakeholders. The likely reason is that the

leaders and administrators are more informed about the expected positive impacts, especially with regard to administrative aspects and systems.

Anderson (2006), Cheng (2010) and Gallagher (2014) have found that although academics accept some QA operations, they represent a major concern for academics when the process affects them directly and threaten their autonomy, freedom and professional positions. Specifically, students' evaluations of teaching, a leading performance evaluation procedure, are, in some cases, the cause of uncertainty among some academics and resentment and resistance among others.

Welsh and Metcalf (2003) observe that "colleges and universities may initially appear as havens of consensus to those on the outside, but cooperative relationships between faculty and administrators are sometimes difficult to achieve" (p. 447). Le Grange (2014) argues that QAPs may create conflicts within educational organisations. It may lead to conflicts between work teams and among individuals as QAPs focus on audit and judgement. This may make individuals defensive. It also has the potential to create conflict between the representatives of educational institutions and external auditors, especially when the auditors use their authority negatively.

Quality concepts and mechanisms are also defined in different ways by different stakeholders (Harvey and Knight, 1996). The disparate understandings of QA concepts and QA mechanisms can lead to confusion and conflict between the university management, and quality units and faculty members (Anderson, 2006, Sanyal and Martin, 2007). Academics in Anderson's (2006) study also mentioned inconsistencies in understandings of quality concepts; this is reflected in their criticism of the QAPs in their universities. Some academics also find that quality principles are not consistent with the QAPs that are being followed.

Finally, Crosby (2005) has suggested that, in order to ensure personnel support quality processes, it is better to discuss with them directly the premises and the basics of quality, so to help them understand the meaning of quality. Cardoso et al. (2013) recommend that decision-makers in education policy should develop systems and models of quality that are more compatible with academic preferences. This may help to reduce staff resistance and may increase compliance with the requirements of quality and enhance participation. In addition, Le Grange (2014) argues that enhancement of stakeholders' engagement in QA

operations requires clear standards and mechanisms, sufficient qualified staff, activation of positive communication to tackle organisational conflicts, plus clear roles on the part of individuals and committees who are linked to the operations.

4.10 Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Arab Gulf States

The education reform process in the Arab world has embraced the concept of QA as means toward the development of educational outcomes. Arab universities are not isolated from the global HE sector. Especially in developing countries, institutions face significant challenges such as increases in student numbers, the low level of graduates and a lack of education outputs compatible with labour market requirements. In addition, there are problems related to administrative and organisational aspects, such as bureaucracy and the use of traditional methods of management that do not fit with modern trends in HE. In response, many Arab countries have moved in the last few years to establish systems and bodies for QA in HE (Mansouri, 2012).

Due to the growing demand for HE and for upgrading the standard of its quality, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has provided a range of initiatives in the Arab region to support efforts in accreditation and QA projects. Conferences and training programmes took place in 2000 to 2003 to encourage Arab countries and their HEIs to establish systems for QA and accreditation in each country, including the Arab Gulf states (UNESCO, 2004, Darandari et al., 2009).

In contextualizing the efforts of KSA (the case study) towards ensuring the quality of its HE, it is helpful to highlight the trends in surrounding countries. This section briefly reviews the efforts of the Arab Gulf countries. These countries have vital common links, such as religion, language, culture and traditions, resources and economic ties. The presence of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf reinforces interdependence and seeks to achieve coordination and integration among the Council's members in several areas, including projects and efforts to improve the quality of education.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

During the past few years HE has been associated with orientations of national development. The UAE is a federation of seven city-states with a population of about 4.4 million. In conjunction with economic growth, the UAE has experienced high demand for

access to HE. One reason behind this demand is the growing population of expatriates entering the country who do not get an opportunity to study in federal university institutions. In response to this demand, the UAE attracted a number of foreign universities who have opened branches in the UAE. These universities have their home location in several countries: the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. To ensure that these universities offer a high quality education the UAE government has established a federal agency, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), to provide the function of external QA. In Dubai it has established what are known as Free Zones that provide a mechanism for bringing international HE providers to Dubai in a manner that ensures the quality of academic activities and outcomes. Dubai's government has also established the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) to validate such institutions and their programmes based on their place of origin. To sum up, there are three HE segments and three corresponding QA systems: federal institutions established by royal decree, private institutions licensed by the CAA, and the Free Zone institutions in Dubai quality assured by KHDA. Although these three types serve separate roles in the UAE, the differences in their systems presents a challenge in relation to developing procedures for mutual recognition between them. There is an argument in keeping with international trends to establish a unified national system of QA (Rawazik and Carroll, 2009).

The Kingdom of Bahrain

Due to the presence of a number of economic challenges in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the government created a semi-autonomous government agency called the Bahrain Development Board (BDB). In 2001 the BDB presented a study that confirmed that education is one of six factors that could help promote business investment in Bahrain. Accordingly, the government has implemented a national project to improve education opportunities. In 2007 the Quality Assurance Authority was established to facilitate the implementation of the BDB's strategies for development in the education sector. The Quality Assurance Authority depends indirectly on good practices in the HEIs of Bahrain. These are used to benchmark standards. The University of Bahrain (UoB) is considered by the Quality Assurance Authority to be a leading institution on quality issues. The UoB has established many procedures to assure the quality of outcomes. Some of the procedures are designed to assure the quality of academic services while others are designed to assure the quality of administrative services (Al-Alawi et al., 2009).

Sultanate of Oman

Since the mid-nineties, there has been an escalating growth in Oman's HE; with the majority of this growth in the private sector. The government responded to demand with reform that allowed locally-owned educational institutions to provide foreign academic programmes through cooperation with credible and high level international educational institutions. In Oman there are now more than two hundred diploma and academic degree programmes sourced from twelve countries. Although the strategy of importing international academic programmes was successful in keeping up with growth, there are challenges that have emerged as a result of this trend. Oman has not only imported a range of academic programmes, but also a variety of standards and QA systems, which puts pressure on the local sector. In 2001 the government established the Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) for accrediting institutions and programmes through standards, information, reviews, improvement processes, and by maintaining a national qualifications framework. In 2006, with an external consultant group, a draft plan for quality was developed for Omani HE. This includes four areas: infrastructural policies and frameworks; institutional QA; programme QA; quality enhancement and capability development. The HE sector in Oman is small, but by importing international programmes Oman was able to expand the sector and improve quality (Carroll et al., 2009, Bandary, 2005).

Qatar

The HE system in Qatar is composed of two types of institution, national and international. There is one national institution (the University of Qatar), and there are eight international universities. Qatar is seeking to keep pace with economic and social growth and to respond to the requirements of the knowledge and technology community. This concern is reflected in the increasing acceptance rates of students, budgets and improvements in the quality of the learning environment. In 2003 Qatar University started working on an initiative to improve the quality of education and enhance administrative efficiency. The Board of Regents and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning are leading the processes of reform. A Senior Reform Committee, including experts from Qatar University and international bodies in the field of university management and operations was formed to provide advice. In the private sector, the HE Institute of the Supreme Education Council has begun to develop the standards for the licensing and accreditation of private HEIs. These standards are now the reference for the establishment and accreditation of colleges and universities in Qatar (Al Attiyah and Khalifa, 2009, SEC-HEI, 2011).

Kuwait

In Kuwait there is one public university, Kuwait University, which was established in 1966. Responding to growing demand, the government agreed to allow the establishment of private HEIs. In 2000 the number of private colleges and universities reached more than eight institutions. In 2010 the Ministry of HE in Kuwait established the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ) for overseeing QA and accreditation processes across tertiary education. The objective of NBAQ is to improve the level of HE institution programmes in the State of Kuwait and to identify partner institutions of HE in other countries that operate in accordance with the standards of global accreditation bodies. In 2015 the Ministry of Higher Education approved the standards, procedures and mechanisms for the implementation of academic and institutional accreditation processes
(Al-Atiqi and Alharbi, 2009, NBAQ, 2015).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

There was no quality system in the Saudi HE before the establishment the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) in 2004. Prior to this development, the main universities, King Abdul Aziz University, King Saud University, King Faisal University and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals had taken individual initiatives towards accreditation and QA. A number of colleges and programmes in these universities granted academic accreditation from international bodies, such as the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in the United States (Darandari et al., 2009, Abdul-Jabbar, 2012).

The NCAAA has responsibility under its by-laws for establishing standards and for the accreditation of all post-secondary institutions and programmes outside of military education. Its responsibility relates to both institutions as a whole and to the individual programmes these institutions offer. The Commission is an independent authority whose role is separate from that of the ministries and other government agencies to which institutions are administratively accountable, and which may establish regulations and reporting requirements for these institutions. The Commission’s responsibilities relate to quality issues, which include the resources available, processes followed, quality of services provided and quality of student learning. The Commission has established required standards in eleven broad areas of activity and has developed a qualification

framework that specifies foundational standards of learning outcomes for each level of qualification. It expects institutions to establish internal quality assurance systems that ensure high levels of quality in all of these eleven areas (NCAAA, 2015).

Quality assurance of internal systems must include processes of strategic planning in relation to appropriately defined institutional mission statements, and short-term and long-term planning and reporting procedures, based on evidence of quality of performance. Evidence-based self-evaluation must be undertaken to assess performance and plan for improvement. These self-studies ought to be followed by independent external peer reviews that verify the conclusions of the self-studies and consider performance in relation to international standards. The Commission considers the reports from these independent external reviews in making its decisions on accreditation. Institutions and programs, after they have achieved full recognition and accreditation, will be reviewed once every seven years (NCAAA, 2015).

The NCAAA has adopted a combined mechanism for accreditation and QA requirements in a unified framework. Quality assurance requires the fulfilment of eleven standards, which covers all aspects of performance in HEIs (Abdul-Jabbar, 2012). Standards are generally considered 'good practices' in HEIs. These good practices must be clear, must enable institutions to refer to them in their internal quality processes and must enable external reviewers to use them as criteria in evaluation processes. The practices are formulated in two sets of standards: standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions and the standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes. They both cover the same general areas of activities but there are some differences, which reflect a total institutional overview on the one hand and the perspective of just one specific programme on the other. In addition, some general institutional functions are not considered in a programme evaluation. The standards are presented in five groups (NCAAA, 2011, p. 13, Abdul-Jabbar, 2012, p. 74):

A) Institutional Context

1. Mission and Objectives (with five sub-standards at institutional level, and five sub-standards and programme level).
2. Governance and Administration (with eight sub-standards at institutional level, and five sub-standards and programme level).
3. Management of QA and Improvement (with five sub-standards at institutional level, and five sub-standards).

B) Quality of Learning and Teaching

4. Learning and Teaching (with eleven sub-standards at institutional level, and ten sub-standards at programme level).

C) Support for Student Learning

5. Student Administration and Support Services (with six sub-standards at institutional level, and four sub-standards at programme level).
6. Learning Resources (with four sub-standards at institutional level, and four sub-standards at programme level).

D) Supporting Infrastructure

7. Facilities and Equipment (with five sub-standards at institutional level, and four sub-standards at programme level).
8. Financial Planning and Management (with three sub-standards at institutional level, and two sub-standards at programme level).
9. Faculty and Staff Employment processes (with four sub-standards at institutional level, and two sub-standards at programme level).

E) Community Contributions

10. Research (with three sub-standards at institutional level, and two sub-standards at programme level).
11. Institutional Relationships with the Community (with four sub-standards at institutional level, and two sub-standards at programme level).

The standards are also used with two companion documents, the Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Institutions, and the Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Programmes. In addition, it is expected that institutions base their courses and programmes descriptions on the National Qualifications Framework and conduct a planning and review cycle that helps them achieve their objectives and the 11 NCAAA standards (NCAAA, 2011, Darandari et al., 2009). (See Figure 4.1)

In addition, the NCAAA has prepared a number of detailed handbooks to explain the principles, standards and phases of QA, the operation of internal QA, the operation of external QA, and the steps for establishing QA systems in HEIs. In addition, the NCAAA has designed a number of attachments that explain the terms used in the procedures and required forms that are used in the operation of QA. (For more details see NCAAA, 2011.)

In an effort to increase participation in QA activities at all institutional levels, the involved higher institutions have realised that there is a need to build organisational capacity. Therefore, many institutions established quality centres, units of academic and administrative development, plus units of academic assessment. Furthermore, they held a range of programmes and workshops to increase staff skills, increase their awareness of the importance of QA and change their attitudes towards quality (Darandari et al., 2009). It is worth noting that during the development period for the KSA's model of QA and accreditation, considerable help and support was given by the British Council through the Excellence in Higher Education project. This project facilitated intensive consultation and support in developing the Saudi HE QA and accreditation system. For instance, in the period 2005 to 2008, the British Council's Excellence in Higher Education project contributed to the provision of training workshops covering areas of HE quality, including: quality management, quality assurance and enhancement issues, teaching and learning strategies (Darandari et al., 2009). This training support has continued to the present day. The NCAAA has carried out thirty-two workshops in 2014, benefiting approximately 1515 faculty members of KSA higher education institutions. In 2015, NCAAA has also launched ten workshops, three of them in collaboration with the British Council. These programmes focus on topics commensurate with the nature of the development phase experienced by many institutions of higher education in the field of accreditation and quality assurance processes (NCAAA, 2011, Al-Shemaly, 2015).

Benefitting from international expertise, Saudi Arabia has been able, in just a few years, to develop, test and apply a new system of QA. The system is characterised as comprehensive and clear, with precise details. This has helped to increase the stakeholders' acceptance of the new system – at least to some extent. There are, however, some difficulties facing the operation and hindering the achievement of the objectives (Darandari et al., 2009), which the next section in this study will address.

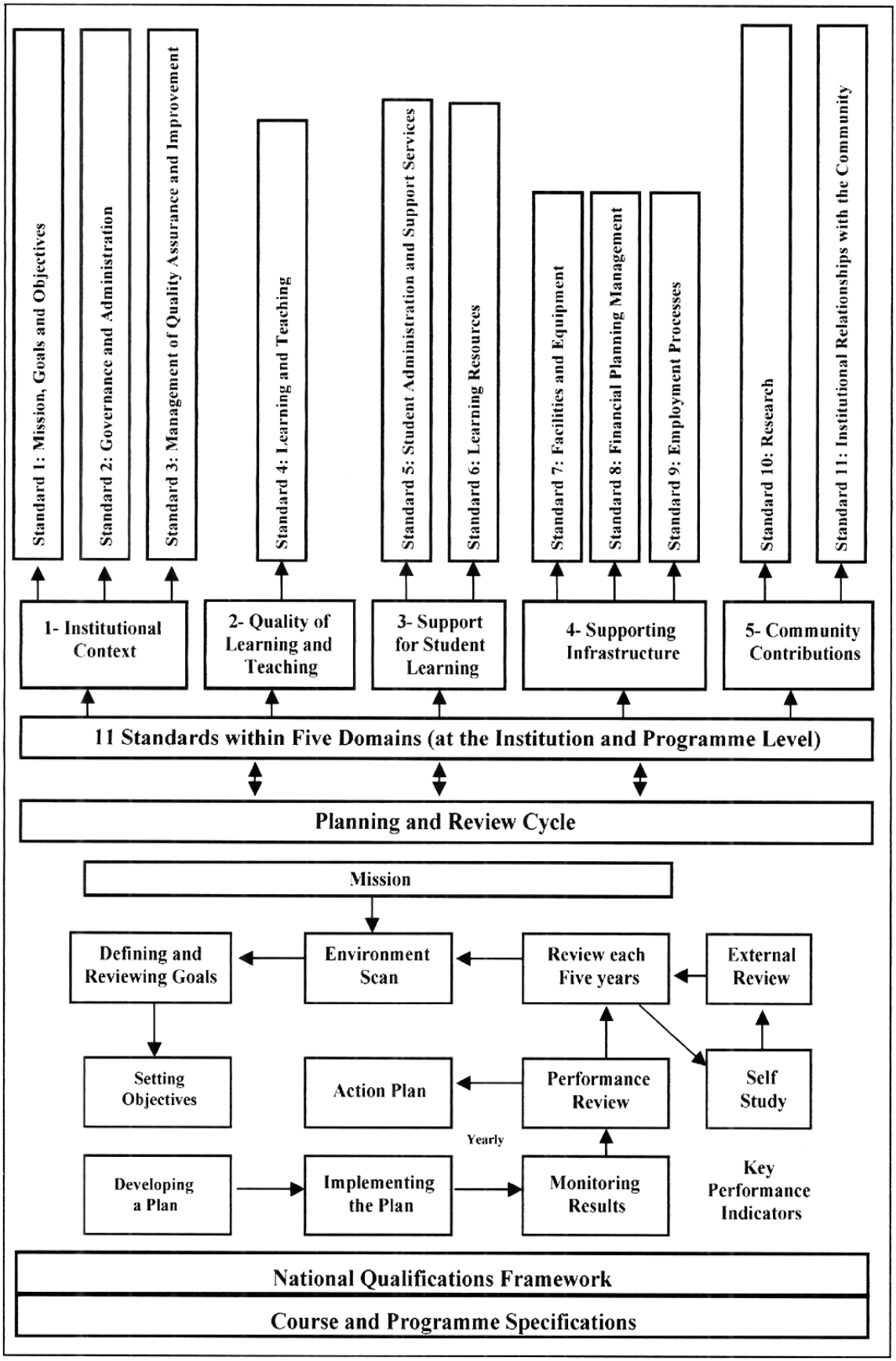

Figure 4. 1 Quality assurance and accreditation in KSA (Darandari et al., 2009, p.46)

4.11 Challenges in the Operation of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

When any organisation seeks to adopt new processes, as with any new system of management, or to develop the quality, the routes leading to the achievement of the objectives are not strewn with flowers. Institutions of HE need, more than others, to discuss and examine any proposed change (Sorensen et al., 2005, p. 327). This section highlights the key challenges raised in the literature and previous studies in regard to the operation of QA in HE, with consideration of the KSA context.

Arguably, improvement initiatives in the HE sector face several challenges that may hinder success (Newton, 2010). Changes in HE regimes and attempts at increasing control of the academic sector can meet resistance. This happens because the potential regime of a university is likely to impose considerable stress on staff, especially when it comes to the tensions between the logic of managerial control and the respect of professional autonomy (Deem, 1998). Therefore, it is likely that some individuals and groups will support the change in organisations, while others will resist it. In many cases, organisations resist change for a number of reasons, thus creating problems for the organisation (Kiritsis, 2009). In addition, the absence or weakness of stakeholders' involvement in the operation is a serious issue. As Arkin's (2012) study concluded, challenges in the QA operations are mainly the result of the lack of engagement, cooperation between academic members and institution administration.

Stensaker et al.'s (2011) study warns that there is a real concern that processes of QA are not effective, increasing instead bureaucracy and control more than they address issues of high importance in the minds of stakeholders.

The literature also highlights the difficulty and the complexity of QAPs, and obtaining data to serve QAPs, either because they are not available or difficult to access. The provision of data and statistics needed for those in charge of QAPs is essential when assessing the situation of institutions and also for comparisons between inputs and outputs (Sanyal and Martin, 2007, p. 15, Alhkaimi, 2012).

In Arab universities, Alhkaimi (2012) has noted a number of faculty members perceive that QA mechanisms, such as accreditation, are a luxury. Faculty members believe that improving the quality of the university's performance in carrying out their roles can be

done through good governance, the application of existing laws and regulations, granting more powers for scientific councils, improving working conditions, providing incentives and promotions and achieving justice and equality in the work environment.

Other serious challenges facing the operation of QA in Arab countries have been summarised by Mansouri (2012). These are a lack of resources, a central administration, a lack of universities' independence, a quantitative expansion in universities, focusing on the quantitative standards more than the quality standards, the weakness of the ability to use information technology to accomplish tasks, and, finally, the lack of research efforts, especially with regard to the field of development and improvement.

Darandari et al. (2009) determined that a number of factors make the operation of QA a major challenge in HE in KSA: a quality assurance culture was introduced very recently and is still underdeveloped in many institutions; the size and type of the institutions; management structure; and, in addition, an ideology of centralisation is widely used in the universities' administration, which does not comply with a culture of quality, which requires decentralisation.

In KSA, Abdul-Jabbar (2012) outlined several problematic concerns in the operation of QA systems:

- The absence of monitoring quality before applying for accreditation. The accreditation procedures and QA operations often begin after the graduation of the first batch of students. This may lead to leaving the institution or programme without oversight by the body responsible for accreditation in the period between the establishment phase and the graduation phase of the first batch of students. The problem is compounded when the institution does not have an effective internal control system. This, in turn, may lead to damage to the students or cause the institution or programme to be unable to achieve accreditation standards in future.
- The absence of professional accreditation institutions and the inactive role of academic societies. Across the world, professional accreditation institutions establish specialised standards in their fields, identify expected learning outcomes of educational programmes and accredit these programmes. Moreover, these bodies are usually responsible for licence tests, with help and support from academic associations in the same field. However, due to the absence of these bodies in KSA,

the NCAAA has taken the responsibility and played their role. This creates a heavy burden for the NCAAA and forces it to expand the validity of accreditation decisions to seven years, instead of five years, as in international practice.

- The absence of statistical data essential for benchmarking. Accreditation and QAPs require a tremendous amount of diverse data. Information is used as evidence to judge the level of the quality of programmes and institutions. These data require a system for the management and dissemination of data and to facilitate access to it, in order to benefit the process of quality improvement. It is noticeable that there is an absence of many of the required data and difficulty in obtaining them in KSA.
- Different treatment for faculty members based on their nationalities. For reasons of job security for citizens, the HE system in KSA includes bylaws regulating issues for Saudi faculty members and other bylaws for non-Saudis. This is considered a violation of global accreditation standards.
- Limited national expertise in the area of assessment and accreditation. The continued expansion of institutions and education programmes in KSA requires a significant number of evaluations. Given that the trend towards QA and accreditation is new in the Kingdom, as well as the fact that there is a scarcity of local experts, it is incumbent upon the NCAAA to use international experts to meet the shortfall and this will consequently cause a rise in process costs.

Another issue in KSA, as has been mentioned in the previous section, is that the NCAAA provides dozens of workshops to train faculty members on the requirements of accreditation and QA operations. However, the most important obstacle is that some universities are not keen to send targeted individuals to the training as designated by the NCAAA. For example, there are those who come to attend the advanced courses that have not attended the basic courses. In this case they cannot take advantage of the advanced courses. In addition, the absence of some individuals who have registered to attend the workshops cause others to miss the opportunity of taking advantage of the programmes (Al-Hakim, 2012).

4.12 The Keys of Success and Lessons Learned to enhance the Operation of Quality Assurance

"Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort".

John Ruskin (1819–1900).

This section highlights key issues and lessons taken from the literature and the experience of many countries in the operation of QA and which deserve consideration by stakeholders in the effectiveness of systems and processes.

Brown (2004) outlines six key requirements for an effective system of QA:

> The underlying purpose must be improvement, not accountability; the regime must focus on what is necessary for quality improvement; the regime must bolster, not undermine, self-regulation; the arrangements must be meaningful to, and engage, all those involved; the arrangements must promote diversity and innovation; there must be adequate quality control (of the regime); there must be clear accountability (of the agency); there must be proper coordination with other regulators or would be regulators (Brown (2004).

Reichert (2008) has argued that real attention to QA requires taking into account the achievement of two sets of conditions. The conditions at the level of the individual include: a confidence in the benefit of assessment, a desire to reveal weaknesses and readiness in time and effort when there is a need to improve performance. Required conditions at an institutional level involve: the ability to understand the results of evaluation, a sufficient degree of institutional autonomy, institutional leadership capable of orchestrating hard and long-term changes, plus the availability of resources to support changes and promote initiatives.

Martin and Stella (2007) asserted that three significant points should be kept in mind when considering QA projects in HE (pp. 104–105):

1. "Quality assurance is not an aim in itself". In general, it is a mechanism to support the development of HE. In particular, it is an instrument used by governments or agencies with the authority to protect the stakeholders from a low-quality education, and to improve the quality of academic departments and institutions.

2. "Quality assurance has a cost: both financial and human". Moreover, the QAPs take up part of academics' time, which normally is used for teaching and research. Therefore, the continuation of QAPs depends on proving its effectiveness as an instrument to improve the quality of HE.
3. "The existence of a quality assurance mechanism does not automatically mean that national HE provision is of good quality". It is likely that QAPs help in identifying difficulties and required resources to improve the quality of education. However, it is not the solution when academic institutions are suffering from a lack of qualified human resources, and a deficit in infrastructure and equipment, as is the case in some developing countries.

In addition, some key issues discussed in the literature need to be considered as essential elements to enhance the operation of QA:

Work conditions: Lim (1999) observed that elite universities' experience in developed countries evidenced that the achievement of QA objectives in improving academic activities becomes significant when there are: well-qualified staff, high enough salaries to live comfortably, upgrades are based on performance and not on political or social relations, availability of academic freedom, working in an environment where the personal relationships are stable and the commitment of leaders and managers toward continued quality improvement. Lim argued that an attempt to implement QA systems in poor working conditions would be a waste of time.

Training for quality: Oakland (2003) has stated: "The essence of changing attitudes is to gain acceptance for the need to change, and for this to happen it is essential to provide relevant information, convey good practices, and generate interest, ideas and awareness through excellent communication processes" (p. 315). Achieving success in the QAPs depends on how stakeholders grasp the concepts of quality, implementation planning, administrative structures, roles, through training on practices and working tools (Darandari et al., 2009).

Cooperation and formation of partnerships: The cooperation and formation of partnerships with reputed educational institutions helps educational institutions to learn and manage academic and quality standards and practices. Partnership helps startup institutions

in the field of QA to build appropriate traditions of quality in a timely manner, which helps them achieve high levels of standards (San and Kong, 2012).

Organisational structure: The establishment of specialised offices to supervise the processes of institutional and programmatic QA is necessary to consolidate a culture of quality, and to enhance the participation of stakeholders in the processes and improvements (San and Kong, 2012). In addition, it is essential to build high-level coordination between all committees and units involved in QA operations (João Rosa et al., 2006).

Quality culture, quality assurance and the culture of the institution: The success of the operation of QAPs depends on the acceptance and engagement of all stakeholders in the organisation, and this requires the availability of an appropriate organisational culture. The literature refers to a strong correlation between organisational culture and quality systems in institutions. An understanding of this relationship helps in the successful implementation of quality mechanisms. Therefore, the quality mechanisms must be formulated in line with the culture of the organisation, or vice versa (Klein et al., 1995, Vettori et al., 2007). Harvey and Stensaker (2008) emphasise that the success of QA initiatives depends on a practical investment in an institution's culture, identity and organisational environment. Harvey (2007) argues that it is pointless to implement QAPs if they are inappropriate to the strategic place of quality in the organisation, do not reflect the normal working practices of staff or do not become a natural part of their daily lives.

Quality assurance systems and culture: It is necessary that the QA system is appropriate to the circumstances and culture of developing countries: it should not be a simple copying of developed countries. Importing a system from an advanced country without adapting it to be compatible with the realities of a developing country may lead to critical problems or failure (Amin et al., 2005).

Dissemination of a culture of quality: There are many approaches to promoting a culture of QA in HE. They include running awareness campaigns about the importance of QA through the media, seminars, conferences and internet sites. It is also important to provide training for faculty members to meet the requirements, and training of those responsible for operations management (Amin et al., 2005).

Leadership and management: The experience of global HEIs demonstrates that the successful implementation of QA depends on the existence of committed management that has a sufficient capability to accommodate the complexities associated with its operations. It is necessary that senior management be characterised by stability, perseverance, commitment and attention to all levels (Sorensen et al., 2005, p. 327). Bush and Coleman (2000) have highlighted that; "Good management makes a difference to the quality of schools and colleges and to the educational outcomes of their students" (p. 3).

Data accessibility: Sanyal and Martin argue that institutions of HE must develop internal information management systems that empowers internal and external stakeholders to access information required during QA operations (Sanyal and Martin, 2007, p. 16).

Engagement: It emerges as crucial that every employee within an educational institution has an adequate awareness of quality education (Jani, 2011). The success of QAPs relies on stakeholders' participation and cooperation and a high level of transparency and candour (Amin et al., 2005). More training and research is required to understand the emotional response of individuals towards QAPs, such as controls and auditing. Failure to read the behaviour of individuals may make them defensive, which could lead to conflicts (Le Grange, 2014).

Commitment: Typically, well-known international universities and institutions adopt QA practices internally and externally as part of the overall framework of practices for QA, accreditation and recognition of qualifications. Without doubt, this is important in order to improve the quality continuously. These strategies are effective if institutions are seriously committed to the practices and standards of excellence in QA – otherwise the strategies and tools mean nothing (San and Kong, 2012).

Maintenance and development: Quality assurance requires compatible management and staff, strengthening institutional objectives to improve operations, or reform education. In addition, institutions need to adopt effective procedures for the development and maintenance of the quality culture between evaluations (Kettunen, 2012).

Effective operation: Reichert (2008) has highlighted that there are a number of factors that play important roles in the enhancement of QAPs. Academics, administrators and senior management should be willing to look at the evaluations and recommendations

seriously. The frequency of QAP cycles must be reasonable; repetition of operations may lead to fatigue and thus reduce the desire and motivation to participate. Feedback from peers is a crucial element in the assessment of QAPs. Taking into account recommendations emerges as an important factor in the improvement and the achievement of quality objectives. (Darandari et al., 2009). Feedback should be well organised to ensure decisions are taken according to reliable information. In addition, review data must be available at the institutional or national level and be utilised for improvement.

4.13 Summary

This chapter explored the global contemporary trends that influenced the recent development of HE and how QA developed in Saudi Arabia's HE. It aimed to provide a background overview of quality and QA and to consider factors identified as significant in implementing systems of QA in HE. Definitions of quality and QA have been discussed from multiple perspectives; reflecting global influences and trends. However, differing perspectives may create confusion that could adversely affect the operation of QA.

The literature reviewed has pointed to many critical issues that need to be addressed when establishing and achieving the purposes of systems of QA in HE. Stakeholders' engagement represents a major challenge in achieving the objectives of QA mechanisms. There are those who consider QAPs as the way to develop and improve the quality of HE. On the other hand, there are those who believe that if QAPs have not reached the levels required by stakeholders, they become far from satisfactory, can be a complicated bureaucratic procedure, a waste of time, a limit on academic freedom and QAPs become detached from activities essential to education. Other critical challenges, noted by previous studies, are the existence of conflict and poor relations between the academic and administrative levels of institutions. Such tensions can significantly hinder the operation of QA and its contribution to quality.

Because KSA is the case study location for this project, the concept of and background in quality in Islam has been highlighted along with the evolution of QA efforts in the Gulf States. This portrait of trends in the region aims to help set the context. There is a great variation in the field of QA operations between countries and KSA seems to have come a longer way in this area compared with its neighbours. Trends suggest an ongoing need to find a framework for a job well done, to promote a culture of QA and to enable

stakeholders to be part of the body of the institution rather than externally imposing a concern for quality.

There are few empirical studies that have targeted the exploration of stakeholders' perceptions toward QA and the challenges that accompany its operation. It is important, as I argued in the introduction, that building systems of QA be viewed as a large project of change, especially in societies where the introduction of QA systems is still recent. It is hoped that stakeholders, including governments, agencies, universities and academic leaders, can take advantage of the theories and models of change and lessons, discussed in the previous chapter of this study, in addition to thinking seriously about taking advantage of the development of recent technology to facilitate, accelerate and enhance QA operations in HE.

Chapter 5: E-Management and Quality Assurance Operations

5.1 Introduction

The adoption of electronic management, "e-management," by organisations in many sectors has increased recently; as an innovative approach that improves management processes, and provides better services to various sectors of an organisation's stakeholders (Okasha, 2004).

One of the research objectives of this project is to explore stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management tools in the operation of QAPs in Saudi HEIs. This chapter highlights the motivations and the benefits discussed within the literature with regard to the development of management approaches that make use of information and communication technology ICT in organisations, and in particular in the HE sector. It reviews instances of initiatives adopting e-management tools in HEIs. In addition, issues surrounding the design of systems of e-management in the operation of QA and implementation challenges will be discussed, and keys for success will be highlighted.

5.2 Globalisation and Development

As discussed in Chapter 3, a large number of researchers assert that globalisation, since the early nineties, has seen a global trend in HEIs moving towards change and the adoption of new systems and management practices. In addition, such change has commonly focused on improving the quality of current practices or establishing new strategic directions (Scott, 2004).

Globalisation is conceptualised as a set of processes rather than a single condition, involving interactions and networks across political, economic and cultural aspects of life (Donn and Al Manthri, 2010). It represents the growing integration of capital, technology, and information across national boundaries in such a way as to create an increasingly integrated world market, with the direct consequence that more and more countries and firms have no choice but to compete in the global economy. This is not to suggest that globalisation is necessarily a good or a bad phenomenon. Many people see it as a major source of opportunities, while critics decry the dangers of interdependency; such as the risk of transferring a financial crisis in one country to another (Salmi, 2001).

Challenges that face governments and educational institutions as a result of globalisation and technological changes in the contemporary world are forcing them to improve the quality of their services (Hachani, 2010). In addition, due to globalisation, there is an accelerated exchange of influence between countries – what happens within organisations in one country can affect organisational transition in surrounding countries (Magrath, 2000).

5.3 The Potential of Information and Communication Technology ICT

Technology has opened up broad prospects for institutions in the public and private sector and helps them to overcome many challenges in their operation. The employment of modern technologies makes organisations more capable of dealing with increases in labour costs, a lack of qualified human resources, a low level of performance and productivity, and external pressures represented by the desire of stakeholders for high quality (Ashour and Shqran, 2010).

ICT is an umbrella term that includes many technological devices and systems. It has played a big role in organisational change. As Nkopodi (2002) asserts;

> The advances in ICT have spurred globalisation, international trade and multinational consortia, giving rise to a focus on management of international supply chains as well as of multi-culturalism. ICT has become one of the core elements of managerial reform for creating the best efficiency and comparative advantages (Liu et al., 2008, p. 85).

ICT has become the main component of managerial improvements that seek to increase efficiency and advantage in organisations (Cameron and Green, 2009). It has opened up a new path for business development in recent decades and countries all around the world have seen the opportunities and benefits that ICT can bring (Liu et al., 2008). For example, ICT is producing a new advanced style of management that is different from what is customary in theories of management. It is likely that the information revolution has affected theorists of modern management and their attitudes and ways of considering organisations' goals, strategies, general resources and human resources (Alkatib, 2002).

The widespread reliance on the internet and digital communication tools to accomplish business and communicate with stakeholders in private sector organisations has put

pressure on public sector organisations to reconsider their organisational structures and bureaucratic organisational model (Ndou, 2004). Moreover, as Norris (1999) has asserted, technological innovations may improve the quality of service delivery to businesses and customers and reduce the cost of public access to information or services, as well as increasing management capacity.

According to Heeks (2001) ICT has the potential to bring about positive change toward achieving the goals of good governance. It offers three potential advantages (p. 3):

- Automation: replacing current human-executed processes which involve accepting, storing, processing, outputting or transmitting information. For example, the automation of existing clerical functions.
- Informatisation: supporting current human-executed information processes. For example, supporting current processes of decision-making, communication, and decision implementation.
- Transformation: creating new ICT-executed information processes or supporting new human-executed information processes. For example, creating new methods of public service delivery.

Based on ICT several systems have been generated, linked to organisation types, and the purposes and kinds of stakeholders. There are many examples of such terms and systems: e-government, e-management, e-services, e-commerce, e-businesses and so on. The e-management term seems the most appropriate one in the context of HE sector.

5.4 The Concept of E-Management

It is argued that ICT is responsible for the transformation from a traditional management system to e-management. This transformation could be one of the most important current public policy issues facing organisations around the world, especially in developing countries. E-management has become an important opportunity that represents a new trend in contemporary management. It coordinates between the knowledge, skills, management experience and contemporary scientific foundations of technologies (AlHabib, 1991). To be precise, it seeks to use information and the internet to manage the resources in organisations, individuals, materials, and electronic devices, as well as to administer policies and procedures in the optimum way (Palvia and Sharma, 2007).

Yao et al. (2011) have defined e-management as:

> A strategic approach of managing future and dynamic organisations through the implementation of a high-performance and technology-based system. It focuses on integration, automation and artificial intelligence by using a rapid development and deployment methodology towards the creation of knowledge environment to achieve the organisation's vision (Yao et al., 2011, p. 6658).

E-management depends on the integration of a number of key features, namely: database management systems (DBMSs), management information systems (Smith et al., 2007), device management, user management (data owner, process owner, system owner, end users), and external entities (Yao et al., 2011). Qadori (2010) argues that the concept of e-management is not limited to making cosmetic changes to the methods of transaction and providing public services and benefits to the stakeholders, but also relates to the mechanism, re-engineering, structural activities, administrative processes and procedures themselves - which get rid of red tape and bureaucracy - and produce the desired quality. Accordingly, e-management represents a model based on the use of advanced informatics and advanced technology to bring about a radical and comprehensive change in organisations.

Organisations now need to be ever more flexible and able to respond rapidly to new opportunities (Magrath, 2000). In response to this, e-management takes into account various issues, including ethical practices, increasing administrative efficiency, and minimising wastage of resources and staff time. Moreover, it can maximise accountability and staff participation (Hashim et al., 2010). In other words, the new importance in using technology in administrative work arises from the advantages it can provide in all development activities and procedures, and in simplifying administrative transactions by transferring them from manual approaches or current electronic modules to advanced electronic frameworks. This objective of e-management can be achieved through the use of optimisation and good exploitation of the latest technology elements and systems, communication networks and connectivity to support excellence, upgrading the efficiency of administrative work and leading to a high level of quality performance (Amara and Buaichh, 2010).

Yao et al. (2011) identify the principles of e-management using the following system dimensions (p.6659):

Integrated system: Before an organisation is able to deal with external systems or link with other organisations it needs first to integrate all internal administrative units and staff in a single system. There are two types of integration: database integration and system integration.

Automated system: An integrated system in an e-management environment means avoiding all manual work and partial conventional computing in communication and information transfer. Work thus becomes fully reliant within administrative units and between organisation departments as it is based based around automated processes. The automation is based on four principles: "process reengineering, real-time data transferring, minimum manual process and minimum human interference."

Intelligent system: The e-management system design, based on what is known as "artificial" intelligence, integrates formulas, algorithms, policies and processes. This contributes to ensuring that all individuals in the organisation follow the rules and regulations of work; it also protects against misuse. Design includes a number of principles, such as optimisation, tuning, analysis, forecasting and solving problems.

Paperless system: The e-management environment means that all paperwork is converted into an information system and circulation is online. This achieves one of the most important principles of e-management: a paperless work environment. It means that no hard copies are printed, except for documents that external users will need and that cannot be delivered via the internet. Some features of such a system are: "online information access, online announcement, online application and approval, online notification and online reporting."

Dynamic system: A dynamic organisation manages changes quickly and effectively. The e-management system supports organisation to be more flexible, to meet demands for change as required and on time. Dynamic system characteristics are: "scalable, configurable, customizable and personalisable."

Based on the above discussion, it is obvious that there are strong links between the current advanced ICT and the tasks involved in, or required by, management. In addition, it seems that the most important characteristics of e-management are that they help to create appropriate technical and organisational conditions to contribute to the establishment of a modern system combining ICT systems and the principles of management in one integrated unit.

5.5 E-Management in the Context of Higher Education Institutions

Recent developments in ICT have led to a transition towards electronic methods of doing business. Hall et al. (2012) highlight that colleges and universities are facing major changes as they navigate the 21st century, and change will not only affect HE but will also factor in countries' future competitiveness in the global market.

E-management has become a central component in the field of education, due to the capability of technology to provide faculty members, students and administrators with essential functions, and to facilitate educational operations. It helps to meet increasing demands from students for better services, while reducing the consumption of resources at the same time (Stewart, 1994). In fact, educational institutions are forced to provide an environment that encourages the creation and distribution of content, expanding opportunities for reusing resources, remixing and repurposing knowledge and content. Good learning environments promote the deployment of rich data for personalised services and QA, while also maintaining accuracy and academic integrity (Porto, 2013).

According to Dey and Sobhan (2007), HEIs are major consumers and providers of electronic products and services. This interest is probably a result of the belief that the optimum implementation of e-management in HE will enhance the quality of both external services, such as teaching, learning, research and internal administrative services. The use of e-management within universities also has an influential role in the success of educational institutions through the integration of the functions and processes in internal administrative units. More effective use of ICT systems can increase the ability of universities to accomplish tasks of high quality, with good regulatory practice and applaudable speed of delivery (Ashour and Shqran, 2010, Batta et al., 2012).

In the context of HE, Bernbom (1999) refers to five essential uses of information: "processing transactions, supporting decision-making, assessing performance, archiving institutional history and providing evidence of institutional actions" (p. 74). Chapman (1990) identified that data can be used to improve the quality of education through four principles: (1) Providing data that can be used to secure the allocation of resources; (2) Allowing a reduction in the number of bad decisions; (3) Detecting inefficient use of resources; and (4) Support mechanisms that mitigate the impact of lost resources (p. 220). The importance of the availability of sufficient data within the management education necessarily leads to the importance of an effective and efficient system for data collection

and analysis to ensure and improve the quality of education. Moses (2001) points out that education institutions are confronted with both internal and external information problems, related to their individual stakeholders. Effective e-management can begin to change both the instrument and the mechanisms used to exchange data and to support decisions. This is done by considering not only what data is essential for decisions, but also who the user is, how it will be used and how that process can be supported.

The successful application of e-management can lead to the achievement of a range of gains: (1) stakeholders become more accountable when a higher education institution applies e-management; (2) activity and actions are more integrated; (3) the optimum use of all types of resources is more achievable; (4) information-based software-aided decision-making can reduce errors and allow new insights. As a result, if the above factors are enhanced by e-management practice in HEIs, it is to be expected that the quality of education will be ensured and enhanced (Dey and Sobhan, 2007, pp. 10-11).

5.6 E-Management in the Saudi Education Sector

In the past few years many countries have witnessed significant transformation and reform in their HE systems, including the emergence of new types of institutions, changes in patterns of financing and management, the establishment of evaluation and accreditation mechanisms, curriculum reforms, and technological innovations (Salmi, 2001). The second chapter of the research has highlighted in detail the development of the technology sector in KSA. This section considers some of the e-management initiatives in the Saudi education sector.

According to the United Nations *E-Government Survey* (2014), KSA is one of the top 20 countries in the world in the provision of e-services (UN, 2014). The Saudi government has been following a policy of introducing e-government in the belief that significant benefits for the national economy will be achieved. In 2003 the government issued a decision by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to develop a plan to provide e-services. Because of the importance of co-operation in various fields for the transition to an information society and to achieve the desired objectives, in 2005 the Ministry established YESSER, the e-government programme, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, and the Communications and Information Technology Commission. The main goal of YESSER is “to reduce centralization of e-Government implementation as

much as possible, whilst facilitating the minimum level of coordination between government departments" (SAUDI, 2015a).

For HEIs, the Ministry of Education has also developed a University System, which is a cloud system. This aims to provide complete e-services and a real-time mechanism to support all HEIs and their members - students, administrative staff and faculty members. The system relies on a national information base for institutions of HE to meet the needs of data for supporting e-services. The University System specialises in linking institutions with each other, in addition to linking HEIs with the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry provides a large number of e-initiatives for multiple purposes, serving stakeholders in HE. Example for this are SFEER for Saudi students abroad; a Certificates Equation System; Communication; and the Education Statistics Centre (M.E, 2015a).

All Saudi universities have a deanship for ICT. These are vital deanships at universities, which provide services for education, research and management across colleges, deanships and departments. Recently, the role of deanships has expanded, with the development of systems and the creation of computer networks. The level of availability of e-services and the extent of use differs between Saudi universities according to a number of factors, including the context of each university, its needs, and available support. For instance, Alharbi (2006) has stated that although governmental organisations in KSA have expanded and dramatically improved the implementation of e-management, most of them (especially educational institutions) are still at the primary stages and face issues connected to technological, legislative, regulatory, financial, educational, organisational and social obstacles. Al-Omiri (2008) has studied the requirements of e-management in Saudi universities. He found that there are only a few experts in developing electronic programmes and there are no clear plans for the implementation of e-management. There is an insufficient network connection among university facilities; there are no monetary rewards to motivate staff to switch to e-management; and, lastly, there is a deficiency in information security.

Worldwide, including KSA, this study could not identify any HE institution that implements a comprehensive e-management system for QA operations. However, the large number of initiatives launched by government institutions in KSA, in particular the Ministry of Education, suggests that KSA is determined to complete the transition to a knowledge society, which depends on technology in all aspects of life. Consequently, the

use of e-management applications in the operation of QA in HEIs is possible and could soon take place. This has prompted the researcher to identify the potential of e-management in QA operations from the perspective of stakeholders.

5.7 Challenges of, and Obstacles to, E-Management in Higher Education Institutions

E-management makes radical changes in regard to handling information and the completion of operations in organisations. Therefore, the emergence of challenges and obstacles that hinder effective implementation is expected. This section discusses the barriers to the implementation of e-management in HEIs.

Despite the positive trends and the important opportunities that the knowledge economy offers for developing countries' growth, the gap between developed and developing countries' use of ICT remains wide (Halabi, 2004). AlHabib (1991) emphasises that information technology is involved in many of the achievements of developed countries in all aspects of the political, economic, social and cultural order. Seeking the same advantages, developing countries have sought to identify and transfer these technology systems; however, after implementation they face many challenges due to a lack of technical expertise, a lack of effective managerial approaches and the absence of appropriate implementation strategies.

Dey and Sobhan (2007) point out that developing countries may face a number of challenges during the implementation of e-management as a result of problems with infrastructure, bureaucracy, policy and the lack of local technical experts. For example, there may be legal impediments to e-management because it conflicts with existing policies. Policies, therefore, must be updated according to the circumstances. To create legitimacy and ensure acceptance of electronic documents and transactions (Qadori, 2010). One of the difficulties facing the application of new electronic systems (e-systems) is to encourage people use them for the purpose for which they were designed, in the everyday life of the organisation (Cameron and Green, 2009, p. 303). To achieve this, the full engagement of stakeholders in the practice of e-management applications is very important. However, the lack of readiness of users and lack of awareness may lead to anxiety, which Lam (2005) has described as a "culture shock." As discussed previously e-management initiatives create radical change in all components of the organisation. The

success of any initiative requires the provision of strong support from senior management, and responsive managers at all administrative levels (Ebrahim and Irani, 2005).

In a study identifying the major obstacles to the development, acceptance, and benefit of e-services, Vassilakis et al. (2005) have classified the main obstacles under five categories (pp. 47–60):

1. Legislative barriers: legislative obstacles can appear from the lack of a legal framework for dealing with electronic documents and responsibilities associated with them.
2. Administrative barriers: senior management may be reluctant to provide e-services for reasons such as: cost justification; need for organisational reform; complex policies; lack of methods for productivity, progress monitoring and accountability; lack of qualified personnel; partner readiness and cooperation.
3. Technological barriers: in recent years, we have witnessed remarkable progress in ICT, but there are a number of issues that may hinder the development of e-services. For example: security and encryption; insufficient user authentication methods; slow and unreliable internet connections; use of proprietary technology and lack of standards; difficulties in interoperability with installed IT systems.
4. User culture barriers: the culture of communities and individuals may be one of the obstacles to the use of e-services. In particular, issues may include a general attitude against e-services; multi-lingual and multi-cultural issues; lack of information; lack of trust; service use costs; technological competence; lack of expert assistance and accessibility.
5. Social barriers: some social barriers may appear in organisations, linked to the issues of power shifts, changes in duties and fear of losing one's job.

In the Saudi HE sector, Bashri (2009) conducted a study aimed at identifying the obstacles to applying e-management in the various administrative departments in a university. The study identified a range of challenges:

Management challenges – slow shift towards e-management because of routine procedures and the lack of training programmes.

Technical challenges – poor maintenance, lack of evidence of the use of regulations and poor infrastructure.

Human resources challenges – lack of qualified technical personnel for maintenance, lack of awareness of the importance of information security and non competence with English.

Financial challenges – weakness of financial support for training and research in the field of technology.

5.8 The Potential of E-Management in Quality Assurance Operations

Previous studies have indicated that QA operations are complicated and they are perceived by stakeholders to be a heavy burden and to involve long bureaucratic procedures. There is little concern about how to tackle these difficulties innovatively using e-management. Kahveci et al. (2012) have stated that the use of e-management systems in QAPs is still innovative in HEIs.

The HE literature concentrates on the links between e-management and QA for teaching and learning purposes, paying insufficient attention to the important relation between e-management and QA purposes themselves. This gap could be a result of focusing more on the main goals of HE, i.e. learning processes. McLean (2003) asserted that the real power of ICT appears when the change starts affecting the processes and the organisation of learning. The technological developments and tools of communication and transmission of information help to facilitate and simplify the work involved in the organisation's procedures, raise the efficiency of workers and improve the performance of administrative units (Ashour and Shqran, 2010).

Amara and Buaichh (2010) have asserted that the entry of information technology into university management is one of the attributes of advancement and one of the key elements in the assessment of institutions. They identify its capability for sustainability and improvement, and the necessity of institutions moving towards maximum use of resources to achieve the organisation's goals. In addition, one of the effects of e-management adoption is that the organisation depends on the flow of information, rather than the hierarchy (Hughes, 2003). Kandel et al. (2010) believe the management of QAPs is one of the most disturbing issues in HEIs, because of the emergence of significant problems during such operations. Using ICT in the management of the operations is understood as having the potential to overcome these problems.

Moses (2000) argues that due to inadequate education information systems in some developing countries, they face difficulties in meeting the increasing demand for information, and therefore, in many cases, obtaining good data is costly and elusive.

Quality assurance is a comprehensive approach that covers all processes in HEIs and seeks to serve all stakeholders in achieving the desired standards. The main problems that arise during the process of QA in HEIs relate to obtaining accurate, reliable and useful information from several sources, working with a large amount of information and documents, analysing information and extracting the results. Therefore, it is necessary to apply ICT systems to overcome these problems (Kahveci et al., 2012). Welsh and Dey (2002) emphasised that in the new reality of HEIs there is a need to develop new models of producing, formatting and taking advantage of information for accountability, and new models of performance for colleges and universities for QA and improvement.

E-management could support the operation of QA in other ways. Salmi (2006) believes that e-management contributes to the simplification of procedures within institutions and shortens the time it takes to complete administrative transactions; it facilitates communication between departments within the institution as well as with other institutions. It also enhances the accuracy and objectivity of operations within the organisation, reducing the use of paper, which improves conservation and documentation, and reduces the need to store documents. Ashour and Shqran (2010) have added that e-management applications provide stakeholders with many essential QA requirements, such as brief or comprehensive reports, including statistics and graphs, to help people make decisions (Ashour and Shqran, 2010). Furthermore, e-management helps to establish an infrastructure that offers opportunities for communities to move towards further progress and towards effective participation and access to a new style in university management that aims to improve the quality of educational institutions (Amara and Buaichh, 2010).

In conclusion, the general concept of the implementation of e-management and QA in HE requires a full mix of implementation strategies when establishing public policy for HEIs. This strategy should include tasks and management responsibilities, an ICT strategy and embrace current and anticipated global trends (Amara and Buaichh, 2010).

5.9 Developing E-Management System for Quality Assurance Operations

The changes occurring inside HEIs are of course directly linked to changes in society itself (Benjamin, 2003) and while technology is a tool that people can use to change their environments (Cohen and Philipsen, 2010), it must be understood in the context of human social constructions and behaviours (O'Sullivan, 2000). It would be difficult to implement

the same model of e-management successfully in all organisations – each organisation has its own characteristics and circumstances. Thong (1999) supports this view and has identified four elements of context that could affect the adoption of technological innovation projects in order to support the operation of organisations. These are: "characteristics of the organisational decision-makers, characteristics of the technological innovation, characteristics of the organisation, and characteristics of the environment which the organisation operates" (p. 192).

Kandel et al. (2010) have emphasised that there is an urgent need to build an e-system to manage QA. Cameron and Green (2009) suggest that it is important to determine the expected contribution of a new information management system. This helps senior management to identify the development requirements, and what level of attention must be provided by everyone in the organisation. Before taking such a step, it is necessary to think about the strategic impact of new systems, and the strategic impact of existing systems in the organisation (p. 285).

The term EMQAP refers to Electronic Management for Quality Assurance Process. The system suggested can be included in any framework to enhance the operation of QAPs. EMQAP can be defined as an integrated electronic system that automates and computerises the operation of all QAPs: managing its data, accomplishment of its requirements and linking its stakeholders by utilising ICT systems and devices. Amara and Buaichh (2010) point out that EMQAP also aims to link all university facilities, departments, stakeholders and other institutions through advanced technology. It works to improve the performance of administrators within the university and faculty members, and to raise the level of all aspects of student learning. Furthermore, it assists discovery and analysis of problems in the university and can help provide appropriate solutions.

Although there is a lack of literature in the area of developing e-management systems for QAPs, some principles and strategies have been highlighted. The first step for establishing such an EMQAP system involves determining the framework of the system and takes into account the following aspects (Kefalas et al., 2003, Kandel et al., 2010):

- University components: academic programmes, degrees, learning content, methods of teaching and learning, staff, technology, administrative services and management structure.

- Attributes: availability of requirements, ease of access and use, effectiveness of learning, performance ability, security and privacy, possibility of change and development.
- Influencing factors: organisation and resources, student support, teaching and learning, curriculum, research, management policies, financing policies and quality policies.
- Stakeholders of HE: government, employers, current students and their parents, academics and administrators, potential students and their parents, and taxpayers.

In addition, Yao et al. (2011) suggest that there are fundamental strategies that should be considered when designing an e-management system, which can also be helpful in developing an EMQAP system (p. 6664):

Database design strategy: Database design must be consistent with the fundamental principles in the field of software engineering. The main components of the database in e-management are "database integration, table normalization, table and field indexing, no hard-coding, database constraints, user access control and locking management."

Application design strategy: All applications should be designed in the light of the major e-management principles, which were reviewed previously (integration, automation, intelligence, paperless, and dynamic). Applications must include the maximum intelligence and automation. E-management applications take advantage of all the possibilities of information technology to improve all processes in the organisation. The main elements of the design of any application are "application integration, object oriented application, flexible and no hard-coded, and comprehensive design."

5.10 Keys for Success in the Implementation of EMQAP

E-management is a complete transformation of the concepts, theories and methods, procedures, structures and legislation underpinning traditional management. This is not a recipe that can be imported or an experience that can be transferred and then applied directly. It is a complex process and an integrated system of technical components and information technology, financial and legislative, environmental and human, and, therefore, there are numerous, complementary requirements to be engaged with if the practice of e-management is to achieve its potential (Abdul-nasser and AlQuraishi, 2011).

- The successful implementation of e-management depends on the right selection of the framework components, namely the correct structures, processes and relational mechanisms. The proposed e-management framework concentrates on these components and their detailed specification. In this case, HE can identify and evaluate the necessary internal and external services suitable in its own context (Dey and Sobhan, 2007).
- The success of the integration between QA and e-management requires the engagement of individuals and the provision of professional training for the use of e-management applications within operations. Confidence is key to effective engagement; therefore, it is important to emphasise privacy and information security against piracy and misuse. Leniency in terms of protecting information may cause a loss of confidence in the e-system on the part of stakeholders, which will lead to failure (Qadori, 2010).
- Selvaratnam (2004) argues that e-management requires leaders who will not only lead, but will champion effective communication, which is vital in several areas, such as problem solving and the public demonstration of learning. In a study of e-management as an approach for management development in Saudi technical colleges, Al-Tamam (2007) recommended that administrators must be convinced of the importance of e-management and have their awareness of the potential of applications raised.
- Al-Omiri (2008) studied the requirements of employing e-management in Saudi universities. Al-Omiri has recommended that universities must provide an integrated infrastructure, connecting all departments and colleges through networks; providing training programmes and workshops for all employees of the university and motivating them to attend; establishing a system of incentives to motivate staff distinguished in the use of electronic applications; cooperate with experts in e-management; and, finally, provide financial support for implementation.

Ndou (2004) points out that despite the fact that developing countries face challenges that hinder their ability to make the most of the ICT revolution, they can be surmounted by considering a number of steps:

- The beginning move is to assess e-readiness, to understand the current situation and the availability of technical infrastructure, legal and regulatory frameworks, skilled

human resources, and to identify potential obstacles. Based on this analysis plans and strategies for an effective implementation can be made.

- Raise awareness among stakeholders of the importance of the new system in the institution, through the organisation of seminars, conferences, training and workshops.
- Ensure flexibility, agility and speed in dealing with emergencies and the ability to make changes during the application of a new system.
- Strengthen cooperation and partnership between departments within the institution with other relevant institutions, such as donors and research centres.
- The success of e-initiatives depends on individual skills and abilities. Accordingly, providing quality training processes and providing incentives for trend-setting staff become priorities.
- Responding to the development and interaction with new alternatives, such as mobile phones, is important to reach an elevated level of stakeholders' participation.
- The development of a comprehensive approach includes: a complete vision and a clear strategy to deal with obstacles; merging operations with organisational policies and strategies; emphasising the role of leaders in raising awareness; and finally making the project a priority for everyone.
- Establishing knowledge management tools and processes to store, use, and retrieve information quickly and easily will contribute in the decision-making process and in continuing improvement.

5.11 Summary

Globalisation represents one of the main factors driving change in developed and developing countries. This change is taking place through such countries taking advantage of information technology. This technology has become an essential element in the transfer of information, experience, knowledge and communication, and in building management systems, such as e-management. E-management has been given some attention by researchers, governments and the private sector in a number of areas. E-management is seen not only as a technical issue but has become a cultural issue. It seeks to change concepts and habits prevalent in management, is expected to have a profound role in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of HEIs and in ensuring their quality.

The literature indicates that e-management is affected by and interacts with surrounding factors both internal and external, whether political, economic, social, cultural or technological factors. An e-management initiative in QA, like any change, needs to create the right environment to succeed, otherwise there is a likelihood of failure (with a resultant loss of time, money and effort). There are many challenges and ICT itself does not guarantee the success of an e-management initiative in the operation of QAPs. E-management must not be seen as a mere tool, it must be integrated fully into the organisation system to become an essential part of its components and support it in achieving its objectives. The success of this form of initiative requires that HEIs provide integrated infrastructure, adequate ICT systems, high levels of support by senior management, effective employee engagement, professional training and continued financial support.

This chapter also outlined the development of e-management in the Saudi education sector, particularly in HEIs.

Finally, the literature review covering QA and e-management has shown that EMQAP is a new idea and emerging approach. This has prompted the researcher to address and explore the potential of EMQAP and to consider its potential in the development of QAPs within HE.

Chapter 6: Research Design and Methodology

6.1 Introduction

In designing a research framework, a researcher must display and clarify three main elements; the paradigmatic position of the researcher (in terms of their claims to knowledge), the methodology that links methods to results (strategies), and data collection methods and procedures of analysis (Creswell, 2009, p. 5).

This chapter outlines the elements of the research design. It reviews and critically evaluates the research paradigm, methodology and instruments used, providing justifications for each particular method and instrument. This chapter reviews the issues of research population and sampling, the procedures for designing, constructing, conducting and analysing three data collection instruments used in this research, and explores the issues of reliability and validity. Several aspects of research ethics are highlighted in relation to the study. Furthermore, this chapter presents concise contextual information about the status of the chosen case study institution. In addition it provides a summary of the scoping study, which was conducted in the first stage of this project, and its main findings.

6.2 Research Design

The nature of research in the field of social studies is such that a coherent design and practical structure is required before a study can proceed to data collection and analysis (Vaus, 2001, p. 9). The function of design is to connect the initial research questions with empirical data through a logical sequence in order to answer research questions as clearly as possible. It also facilitates the work stages and makes the case study stronger and more effective (Vaus, 2001, Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) defines the research design as:

> ... a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. Between here and there may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data, (p. 64).

Any research design framework is dependent upon "paradigms or viewpoints about two important matters," (Scott, 2012, p. 107) namely, ontology and epistemology. Epistemology should be considered as an essential pillar in research work; a study cannot

be separated from the epistemological framework it inhabits. Frequently, researchers ask a series of questions about how particular knowledge can be identified, how they can recognise it when they have found it, and, finally, how ‘truth’ can be distinguished. In this context, researchers seek to establish and describe the truth, along with bringing a wide range of theoretical perspectives to their studies; it might be that "the widest of these is ontology" (Morrison, 2012, p15). These diverse perceptions about the nature of reality have a very important role in any research project, because they affect the means a researcher employs. Thus, the theories of epistemology and ontology affect the methodologies of researchers within their studies, while methodology "is based upon critical thinking about the nature of reality and how we can understand it," (Morrison, 2012, p15).

In the field of educational research, several paradigms have developed. Scott and Morrison (2007) introduced a group of four paradigms as follows: (1) Positivism, (2) Interpretivism, (3) Critical theory and (4) Postmodernism (pp. 19, 20). Of these, the interpretivist philosophy best fits the current research. This paradigm focuses on "the way human beings give meaning to their lives; reasons are accepted as legitimate causes of human behaviour; and agential perspectives are prioritized" (Scott and Morrison, 2007, p. 170). It emphasises that reality is socially constructed; that there are multiple understandings and perspectives of the truth, which are constantly changing through the individual interpretations of many researchers in the field of education (Morrison, 2012, Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, this study relies on the experiences of academic stakeholders in order to explore the reality of QA in Saudi's HE.

Denscombe (2009) points out that research can aim to tackle specific problems or improve existing procedures in a particular environment. Denscombe (2009) also stated that:

> … in the context of organisations and the work environment, the aim of the research is to arrive at recommendations for good practice that will tackle a problem or enhance the performance of the organisation and individuals through changes to the rules and procedures within which they operate. (p. 12).

Accordingly, the primary aim of this study is the development of a framework to enhance the operation of QAPs in Saudi Arabia’s HEIs, giving consideration to educational management, the potential of e-management and stakeholders' perspectives. This overall aim would be achieved by the fulfilment of several objectives; discussed in the first chapter.

Figure 6.1 shows (see below), the research design which consists of four main phases:

1. *Literature review*: *A review of existing literature on QA, its criteria, models of practice, and value in HE*. In addition, this will include a review of the literature on change and change in HE, its leading theories and models, the literature on e-management in relation to HE, as well as its values and frameworks, with a focus on the country of the case study in all aspects.
2. *Scoping study*: this focuses on gathering data that provides an insight into the perceptions, beliefs and experiences of actors with responsibility for aspects of QA operations in the case study university. It explored the main issues surrounding the implementation of e-management and QA systems from the elite stockholders' perspectives. Richards (1994) advocates that exploring the perceptions of major players can help provide understanding of the context around important issues within the researcher's work. Such actors can help in interpreting the personalities involved in the relevant decisions, in interpreting documents and help in explaining the outcome of events. Elite stakeholders also can provide information not recorded elsewhere or not yet available for public release. This allows the researcher to understand the perceptions of stakeholders and what may, or may not, lead them to think or act in the way they do in regard to the issues under exploration in the research (Richards, 1994). In Saudi HE, faculty members can be professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, teaching assistants, language teachers and assistant researchers (M.O.H, 1998). In this research, 'elite stakeholders' refers to faculty members who occupy senior management and academic administrational positions, together with people who have significant influence on and responsibility for the development and running of QA and e-management projects within the research context. Such individuals may play several roles. Elite actors in this research include: a university president, vice-presidents, deans of colleges, deputies of colleges, deans of deanships, deputies of deanships, heads of academic departments, managers and general supervisors of scientific and research centres and their assistants (M.O.H, 1998).
3. *Mixed methods data gathering*: applied using qualitative and quantitative instruments to explore stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QAPs, identify the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of QAPs and to explore the stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e- management tools in the operation of QAPs.

4. *Developing a Framework to Enhance the Operation of QAP*: taking into consideration the previous literature, along with data collected and analysed in this research, knowledge, experience and understanding were synthesised into a framework that aimed to provide heuristic value to practitioners responsible for QA in KSA. It also contributed to the identification of the most appropriate mechanisms and strategies for QA operations, with the benefit of the potential of e-management at universities in KSA. In addition, the project sought to assist the case study university to move towards the development of high quality processes and management in all its departments. The developmental framework was designed to support academic leaders in adopting QA and e-management systems in their management of change towards meeting national standards for quality.

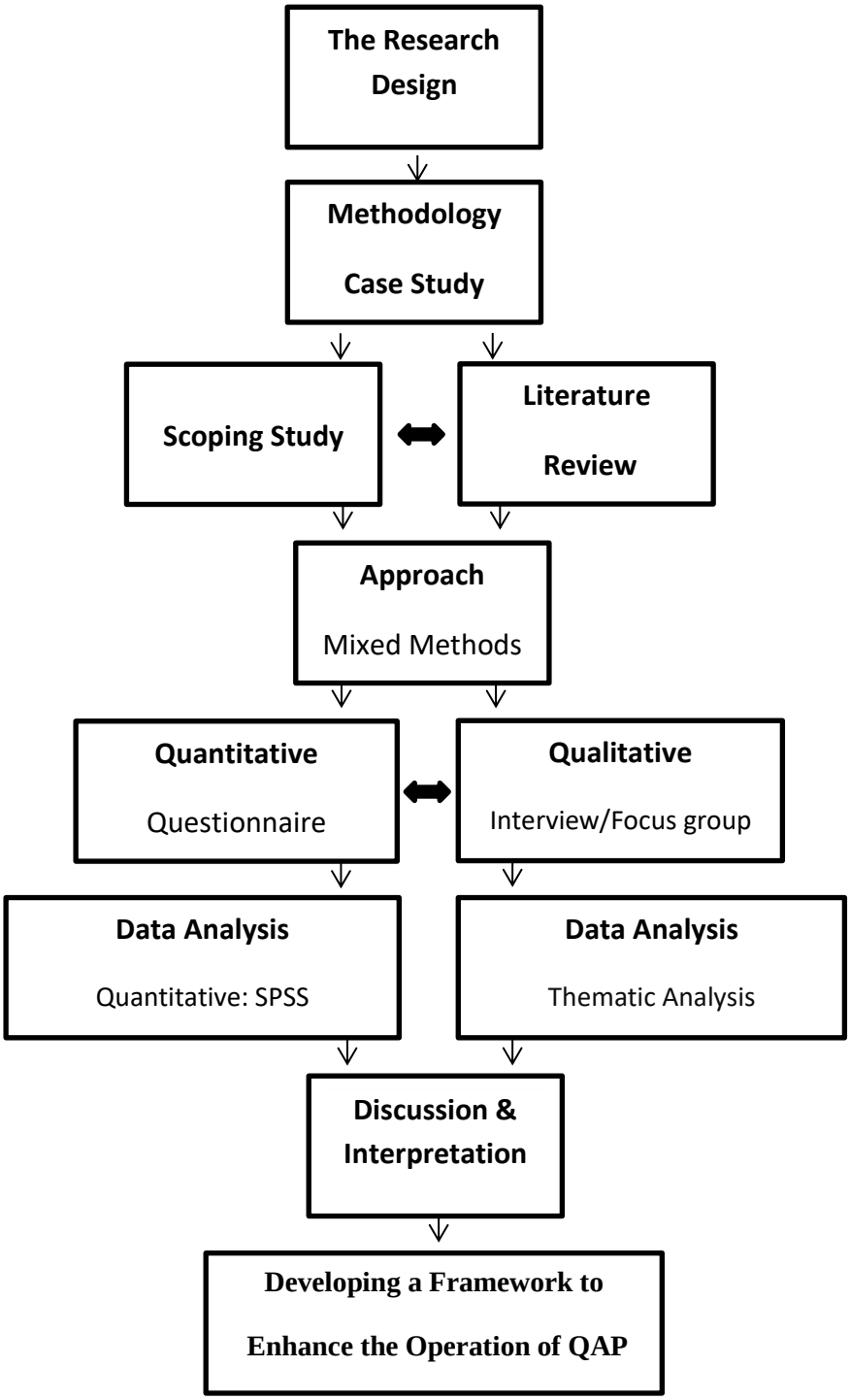

Figure 6. 1 The framework of the research design

6.3 Research Methodology

Scott and Morrison (2007) define methodology as:

> ... the theory of how researchers gain knowledge in research contexts, and why. The 'why' question is critical since it is through methodological understanding that researchers and readers of research are provided with a rationale to explain the reasons for using specific strategies and methods in order to construct, collect, and develop particular kinds of knowledge about educational phenomena (p153).

Based on interpretivist paradigm, this research is a case study of the QA operation of a higher education institution in KSA. Case study research is a widely used methodology in a number of fields and a wide variety of issues under enquiry within social science. It is used as a method of research that contributes to the exploration of many themes and the acquisition of specific information about individuals, groups, social and political organisations, project design, implementation plans, evaluation and related phenomena (Yin, 2014, pp. 31-33, Gray, 2004, p. 123). Whatever the concern of a research project, the need for an effective case study arises from a requirement to understand complex social phenomena; a case study can help researchers to focus on the situation, while maintaining a realistic holistic perspective. This is true for both the study of the behaviour of individuals and groups and administrative processes in organisations (Yin, 2014, p. 31).

Through the analysis of several existing case studies, Yin identifies a twofold definition of a case study. In the first phase, Yin (2014) focused on the "scope of a case study." Thus, a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 48). The second part of the definition focuses the characteristics of a case study:

> A case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis … (Yin, 2014, p. 49).

Yin's definition shows that a case study is not only a way to collect data, or a tool for research design, it is also a method comprising a logical design and several data collection tactics and data analysis approaches.

In the educational field, Bassey (2012) has developed a useful explanation of what can be considered a valuable educational case study. It is an empirical study, conducted in a specified place and time, into interesting aspects of the field of education (activity, programme, organisation, system or the work of an individual), in its natural context, with attention to research ethics, in order to inform decision or policy makers or theoreticians who are working to these ends. Accordingly, appropriate data are collected to allow an investigation of the important characteristics of an issue, the interpretation of the existence of a rational manner, verification of the credibility of the interpretations, the development a worthwhile argument or story, convincingly linking the argument or story to related studies, and finally, reviewing other studies and comparing their findings (p. 156).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest that the case study methodology becomes valuable when the researcher has little control over reality and events. In addition, they highlighted several distinct features of the case study approach (p. 317):

- It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events related to the case.
- It provides a chronological narrative of events related to the case.
- It blends the description and analysis of the events.
- It focuses on the actions of individuals and groups, and their perceptions about the events.
- It focuses on the specific events relevant to the case.
- The researcher can be involved with the issue in an integrated manner.
- In writing up the report, an attempt is made to capture the essence of the case.

In this instance, the case focus is the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia's HEIs, considering educational management, the potential of e-management and stakeholders' perspectives. Drawing on the literature relating to educational management and e-management, together with an understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, the research sought to answer the following main question: What framework can be proposed to enhance the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia's HEIs? The research ended by synthesising information extracted from the literature and results established by the case study into a framework with a heuristic value, which can be used to support practitioners or policy

makers' decisions or inform theoreticians or those responsible for QA in Saudi Arabia's HEIs.

6.4 Case Study: The University

The context of this case study is one of the oldest and largest universities in KSA. The researcher obtained explicit consent from the university senior management to conduct this study. For cultural reasons and because of the sensitivity of some of the issues discussed and the information collected, the researcher has decided, from an ethical perspective, not to announce the name of the university. This decision is partly to protect its reputation, but centrally to protect the participants. 'The university' is used hereafter in this study to refer to the case study institution. This section will briefly outline the university's objectives, main structure and those deanships that have links to the dimensions of the study.

In the context of contemporary global trends in HE, the university is seeking to make what amounts to a quantum leap in the development of the university in general and the development of performance in particular. The message and objectives of the university all focus on providing excellent teaching and learning, respected and reliable research, opportunities for lifelong learning, effective and efficient management, leadership of community development, and strengthen partnerships with the community. The university has 16 colleges with 87 departments, 12 deanships, and a number of management and research centres.

As this study focuses on the operation of QAP in Saudi's HEIs, with consideration to the potential of e-management, it is helpful to present a brief explanation of the main structure of the university, and how the deanships are related to this study's research themes. All Saudi universities typically have the same structures with slight differences.

The university structure involves a president who has a number of roles and responsibilities. One of these roles is supervising a High Committee for QA and Academic/Institutional Accreditation. This Committee is made up of Vice-Presidents, the Dean of Development and QA and his deputies. It supervises, supports and monitors eleven Committees of Institutional Accreditation and creates strategy plans for improvement, based on reports from these committees. In addition, the university has four Vice-Presidents, each with many responsibilities. Only their main roles are set out below:

1. Vice-President for Academic Affairs; responsible for the majority of colleges and for Deanships of Student Affairs, Admissions, and Registration and Preparatory Year.
2. Vice-President for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research; responsible for the Scientific Council and for Deanships of Library Affairs, Scientific Research, Higher Education, as well as for some Research Centres.
3. Vice-President for Administrative and Financial Affairs; responsible for the departments of Planning, Budget, Projects and Public Services.
4. Vice-President for Development and Community Services; responsible for the Centre of Documentation and Archives, and for Deans of High Education Development, E-learning and Distance Education, Information Technology (IT), QA and Academic Accreditation.

As the areas of responsibility makes clear, the Deans of Development and QA and IT are under the authority of the Vice-President for Development and Community Service. The Deanship of Development and QA includes the following units: QA, Programmatic Accreditation, Institutional Accreditation, QA Offices of Women's Sections, Academic Accreditation of Women's Sections, and the Educational Measurement and Evaluation Centre. The Deanship of IT includes departments of the Quality Management Office (QMO), Administrative and Financial Affairs, IT Systems and Network Operations, Application Systems, Web Services Applications, Technical Support, Training and Academic Support, Projects, and Contracted and Resources Management. All the university sectors have QA and Academic Accreditation offices that are supported electronically by the IT Deanship.

The following diagram 6.2 depicts the structure of the university, with focus on the position of QA unites and e-management systems.

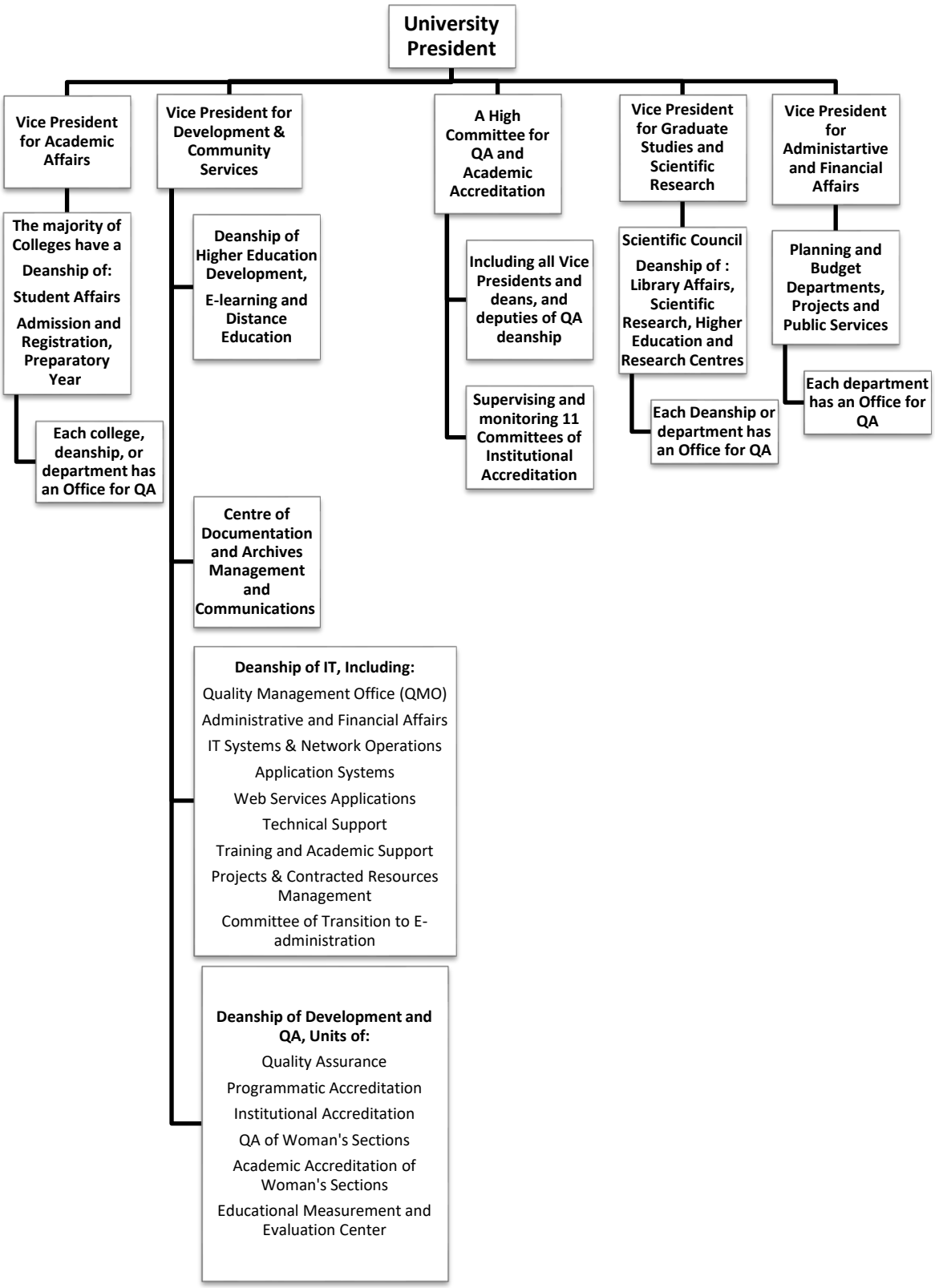

Figure 6. 2 The structure of the university, with focus on the position of QA units and e-management

Deanship of Development and QA

Since it was established in 2010, the mission of the Development and QA Deanship is to lead the process which maintain high standards and enhance the quality of academic programs, support services and administrative units in the university, in accordance with international standards. They are responsible for preparing for accreditation by local, regional and international authorities, and gaining the confidence of stakeholders in the community.

Deanship of Information Technology (IT)

The IT Deanship is one of the vital deanships in the university, providing support to educational and research services, administrative deanships, university faculties and departments. The deanship, since its inception in 1983, has been working to shift administrative and academic works at the university to automated processes through a set of regulations. Currently the IT deanship provides the university stakeholders with hundreds of e-services through many systems, such as: Faculty Applications, Financial Applications, Banner, the E-Library, Councils' Management, Distance Learning, E-learning, Administration and Communication, Blackboard, and an Integrated Content Management System.

6.5 Scoping Study

With social science research design, it can be useful to conduct a scoping study before starting the research study proper. In this project, the scoping study has a particular importance; it helped the researcher to explore important and sensitive issues in the research context and assess the challenges that may be faced during the research. It also helped to refine the research questions and design of the study. Fulop (2001) stated that the scoping study is important "to map rapidly the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available," (p. 194). Yin (2014) asserts that the experimental data, in parallel with a review of the relevant literature, provides insight into the key issues under study: "The dual sources of information helped to ensure that the actual study reflected significant theoretical or policy issues as well as questions relevant to real-world cases," (p. 150).

6.5.1 Scoping Study Methodology

This stage of the project focused on gathering data which provided an insight into the perceptions, beliefs and experiences of those members of staff with responsibility for aspects of QA. Such participants also have knowledge of the extent of, and the application of, aspects of e-management. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the main issues surrounding the implementation of QA and e-management systems in the case study university. There was also an elite aspect to the interview approach: recognising that some interviewees have significant roles within the authority structure of the organisation. The semi-structured interview approach used allowed responses to be more easily compared and reduced the effect of the interviewer on responses.

The interviews were designed to last for 45 minutes, with the possibility of extension with the permission and consent of the interviewees. The interviews focussed on organisational and system arrangements, and the influence (or non-influence) of quality standards, together with the meanings attached to these aspects in the real-world context. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using an approach that was concerned with identifying possible patterns and themes.

6.5.2 Procedures involved in Gathering Data and Data Analysis

- Developing ten main questions for the interview schedule, based on the literature (See Appendix 1. A, B).
- Visiting the management of the university in order to obtain permission to carry out the study.
- Ascertaining the main university structure, with particular focus on QA and e-management aspects.
- Communicating with potential participants via email, telephone, or visiting their secretary's offices, in order to arrange an appointment to conduct the interviews. The process of invitation continued until the target number of interviewees was obtained.
- The pilot study sample was selected so as to be as representative as possible; therefore, participants were from all levels of responsibility related to the study issue.
- After approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Social Science College at the University of Glasgow was obtained, interviews were carried out.

- Two of the ten participants were met twice: once by way of introduction, and the second time to conduct the interviews. The rest of the participants were met once only.
- Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder after the participants' consent was obtained.
- The interviews were transcribed in Arabic. These transcriptions were then translated into English.
- Numbers were used instead of participants' names to preserve anonymity. The records were stored and protected in a safe drive.
- The method of analysis used began by separately summarising key issues and topics and methods of response for each question that emerged during the interviews. This approach of analysis assisted in identifying a number of themes and dimensions that were a source of concern to, or were a matter of interest to, the participants in the study.

6.5.3 Summary of Scoping Study Findings

The following table highlights a summary of the main issues raised and discussed with stakeholders during the interviews. It is presented in the form of eight themes which arose from answers given to the interview questions.

Table 6. 1 Summary of scoping study findings

Themes	Main Findings
1	**Change and Resistance**
• There is a desire to establish quality. However, the university is moving slowly toward QA. • The majority of stakeholders supposed that resistance to change was a visible phenomenon. • Engaging stakeholders in QA activities is a concern that appeared in many situations and levels of the university hierarchy. • Some individuals have difficulty with, or are anxious about, change. Some are unproductive and uninterested. • Some individuals believe QA standards are not compatible with the local culture and are resistant to them. • The university management is generally enthusiastic about change. There are some decision-makers, however, who resist some development changes.	

2	Organisation Structure

- There is a QA office in each faculty.
- Some sectors work slowly because they have many students but few academic and administrative staff.
- QA activities become a pressure for some stakeholders, especially those who have a full academic workload and who also carry out administrative tasks at the QA office.
- Bureaucracy makes administrative activities slower and delays the decision-making process.

3	Awareness and Understanding of QA

- There is a clear increase in the awareness of the importance of QA. This drove the university to build a strategic plan and to designate the functions and roles of all sectors.
- Some participants believe that QA is a new culture in KSA universities, so they have to make more effort to achieve its standards. The university therefore needs to apply means of encouragement and accountability.
- Some respondents believe that the planning and preparation for implementing the QA project was not good enough.

4	Awareness and Understanding of E-management

- The University has a high level of readiness in respect of moving processes from traditional management methods to e-management.
- The implementation of e-management programmes is moving slowly because of the refusal of some users to progress to a new method of work.
- Some administrative stakeholders have no confidence in using e-management to make decisions.
- Stakeholders expressed a demand that senior management design and support a comprehensive e-management system to take advantage of technology in the operation of QA.

5	Links between QA and E-management

- In the university, there is no e-management system for managing QA tasks, nor a clear strategy that might develop links between them. Therefore, there are continuing requests from all sectors to design e-management system for this purpose.

6	Stakeholders and Qualifications

- There is a programme named 'Experts of Quality', intended to qualify some faculty members as experts in QA requirements.

- There is a problem in convincing academic staff to attend workshops about QA.
- In some colleges there are only limited numbers of experts and specialists interested in QA. However, some of them refuse to work with the Development and QA Deanship because they already have many academic activities and responsibilities.

7	**Financial, Technical and Information Support**

Financial support

- There is a big budget for the QA project; however, the university is not fully benefiting from this investment because of a lack of qualified experts and specialist individuals with the ability to carry out development projects.
- The university offers good incentives to encourage stakeholders to get involved in QA aspects. However, some employees said they have not received their incentives, which makes them frustrated and reduces their desire to work.

Technical and information support

- The majority of respondents believe that sufficient information about both QA and e-management systems are available on the university website.
- Some individuals believe there is insufficient information about the concept of e-management and its services on the university website.

8	**National and International Cooperation**

- There are many agreements and partnerships between the university and both national and international institutions about QA and e-management. This indicates that the university benefits from information resources and the experiences of others, allowing them to make informed decisions about its development plan.

Themes	**Main Findings**
1	**Change and Resistance**

- There is a desire to establish quality. However, the university is moving slowly toward QA.
- The majority of stakeholders supposed that resistance to change was a visible phenomenon.
- Engaging stakeholders in QA activities is a concern that appeared in many situations and levels of the university hierarchy.
- Some individuals have difficulty with, and are anxious about, change, or are unproductive and indolent.
- Some individuals believe QA standards are not compatible with the local culture and are resistant to them.

- The university management is enthusiastic about change; however, there are some decision-makers who resist some development changes.

2	Organisation Structure

- There is a QA office in each faculty.
- Some sectors work slowly because they have many students, but few academic and administrative staff.
- QA activities become a pressure for some stakeholders, especially those who have a full academic workload and who also carry out administrative tasks at the QA office.
- Bureaucracy makes administrative activities slower and delays the decision-making process.

3	Awareness and Understanding of QA

- There is a clear increase in the awareness of the importance of QA. This drove the university to build a strategic plan, and to designate the functions and roles of all sectors.
- Some participants believe that QA is a new culture in KSA universities, so they have to make more effort to achieve its standards. Therefore, the university needs to apply means of encouragement and accountability.
- Some respondents believe that the planning and preparation for implementing the QA project was not good enough.

4	Awareness and Understanding of E-management

- The University has a high level of readiness in respect of moving processes from traditional management methods to e-management.
- The implementation of e-management programmes is moving slowly because of the refusal of some users to progress to a new method of work.
- Some administrative stakeholders have no confidence in using e-management to make decisions.
- Stakeholders expressed a demand that senior management design and support a comprehensive e-management system to take advantage of technology in the operation of QA.

5	Links between QA and E-management

- In the university, there is no e-management system for managing QA tasks, nor a clear strategy that might develop links between them. Therefore, there are continuing requests from all sectors to design e-management system for this purpose.

6	Stakeholders and Qualifications

- There is a programme named 'experts of quality', intended to qualify some faculty members as experts in QA requirements.
- There is a problem in convincing academic staff to attend workshops about QA.
- In some colleges, there are only limited numbers of experts and specialists interested in QA. However, some of them refuse to work with the Development and QA Deanship because they already have many academic activities and responsibilities.

7	**Financial, Technical and Information Support**

Financial support

- There is a big budget for the QA project; however, the university is not fully benefiting from this investment because of a lack of qualified experts and specialist individuals with the ability to carry out development projects.
- The university offers good incentives to encourage stakeholders to get involved in QA aspects. However, some employees said they have not received their incentives, which makes them frustrated and reduces their desire to work.

Technical and information support

- The majority of respondents believe that sufficient information about both QA and e-management systems are available on the university website.
- Some individuals believe there is insufficient information about the concept of e-management and its services on the university website.

8	**National and International Cooperation**

- There are many agreements and partnerships between the university and both national and international institutions about QA and e-management. This indicates that the university benefits from information resources and the experiences of others, allowing them to make informed decisions about its development plan.

6.6 The Main Study

The main purpose of this study is to enhance the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia's HEIs by: exploring stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QAP, identifying the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of QAP and exploring the stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management tools in the operation of QAP. In addition, it aimes to assist the case study university to move towards the development of high standards of QAP and management in all its departments. This research sought to provide a developmental framework for academic leaders in adopting QA with the benefit

of e-management systems in their management of change towards national standards for HE quality.

6.7 Significance of Literature Review

Hart (1998) stressed the importance of a review of existing literature because without this, a researcher will not be able to gain a clear understanding of the topic, identify the key issues in the topic; they will not know what has been investigated in the research area, or how those investigations were conducted (p. 1).

The first phase of the research focused on identifying and formulating the problem through a scoping review of the literature. The main research question in the present study is drawn from the literature across the fields of educational management, QA and e-management, together with an interest in understanding of stakeholders' perspectives: What framework can be proposed to enhance the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia's HEIs? To arrive at an answer to the main research question, the present study sought to answer six sub-questions.

The first three sub-questions were contextual and took account of the current state of knowledge and were addressed by reviewing the previous literature, which made a literature review an essential part in this research:

1. What is the global context of HEIs, and how have contemporary trends influenced the recent development of Saudi Arabia's HEIs?
2. How has QA developed in HE transnationally, and in Saudi Arabia's HEIs?
3. What is the significance of e-management in HE, and what can be concluded from the literature on e-management's potential contribution to enhancing the operation of QA processes? (See chapters 3, 4, 5)

With respect to the primary research dimension of the study, the literature review helped inform the design of the study's methodology, select appropriate data collection instruments, and analyse and discuss the research findings. Reviewing the literature on change, QA and e-management contributed to addressing the main research aim, in terms of developing a framework to enhance the operation of QAP in Saudi Arabia Higher Education.

6.8 Research Populations and Sampling

The quality of research does not only depend on the suitability of the methodology adopted or the instruments used, but also on the adopted sampling strategy. Thus, the researcher

must pay attention to four key aspects when determining a sample population: (1) size of the sample, (2) how representative it is, (3) possibility of access to the sample and (4) strategy for sampling (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 100).

The total research population in the university is 1,718 academics, based on the university's Statistics Management report (2014). During three months of fieldwork, the entire population was contacted and invited either to participate in interviews or focus groups, or to fill in the study questionnaire, regardless of major, gender, nationality, language and position. Table 6.2 shows the distribution of gender among the research population, along with the numbers of Saudis and non-Saudis.

Table 6. 2 Research population, based on gender and nationality

Saudi		**Non-Saudi**	
Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
515	433	565	205
Total		**Total**	
948		770	
Total			
1718			

The quantitative data collection was based on the strategy of 'simple random sampling', where every academic at the university had an equal chance at participation (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 110). The sample included senior management members, deans and deputies of colleges and deanships, managers of centres, directors of departments and general academic staff.

Qualitative data collection was based on the strategy of 'stratified random sampling', where the research population is divided into homogeneous groups identified by similar characteristics (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 111). Although the sample for qualitative data was taken from selective groups, all participants had an equal chance to take apart in the study.

Interviews were conducted with participants from three elite groups of stakeholders, belonging to groups of management (decision makers), QA (officers and members of Development and QA deanship, mangers and members of QA offices and related committees) and experts (in QA and e-management systems). The key link between the groups is that they have direct responsibilities for the operation of QA and e-management systems. In addition, one interview was conducted with an external expert from the

government institution for quality. The researcher has decided, from an ethical perspective, not to make known the name of the institution; this is to protect the participant.

For obtaining specific data about QA operations and the potential of e-management, the data was collected through focus groups comprising a group of elite QA stakeholders (officers and members of Development and QA deanship, managers and members of QA offices and related committees). Participants were divided into two groups, based on gender because of time limitations, cultural context and practical obstacles.

6.9 Mixed Methods

One of the major strengths of using case studies for data collection is the opportunity to increase the quality of data by obtaining data from multiple sources. This, it can be argued, is consistent with the growing interest from researchers to use mixed research methods (Yin, 2014, p. 108). Punch and Oancea (2014) define mixed methods research as "empirical research which involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data," (p. 551).

The fundamental principle of mixed methods, as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated, is to "combine the methods in a way that achieves complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses," (p. 18). In this study, using more than one method helped in the gathering of comprehensive and informative data. Yin (2014) emphasises that '… any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a similar convergence," (p. 176). This is consistent with pragmatism, which is a popular philosophy in mixed methods research; pragmatists believe researchers should mix research components that work for both the research question and its conditions (Hibberts and Johnson, 2012, p. 124).

Quantitative and qualitative methods both have strengths and weaknesses. For example, quantitative research is useful for generalization when a study relies on a large random sample of the study population. Nevertheless, when using quantitative methods, it becomes difficult to investigate new phenomena in depth and to discover the views of the participants. On the other hand, the qualitative method provides the researcher with detailed information about the views and beliefs of individuals and communities, but is usually based on small, non-random samples and, therefore, the results may not generalize to the research population (Hibberts and Johnson, 2012, p. 124). However, similar to other

research approaches, a mixed methods approach has more strengths than weaknesses (see table 6.3). For example, one of the key strengths highlighted by Hibberts and Johnson (2012, p. 126) is that the triangulation of findings can support a particular conclusion. However, researchers have to be aware of the challenges they would face in applying mixed methods to their own study – data collection and analysis being much more time consuming in this model.

Table 6. 3 Strengths and weaknesses of mixed research (Hibberts and Johnson, 2012, p. 126)

Strengths
• Words, pictures and narratives can be used to add meaning to numbers. • Numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures and narratives. • It can provide fuller, deeper, more meaningful answers to a single research question. • It can link theory and practice to generate practical theory. • The strengths of an additional method can be used to overcome the weaknesses in another method. • Convergence and corroboration of findings can enhance evidence of a particular claim (triangulation). • Divergence and additional findings can provide insight and broader understanding that will be missed when only a single method is used. • Quantitative sampling approaches can be used to increase the effectiveness of the generalisation of qualitative results. • Combining quantitative and qualitative research produces integrated, varied multiple knowledge.
Weaknesses
• It is difficult for a single researcher to understand and effectively conduct both quantitative and qualitative research; it might require a research team. • The researcher must understand multiple methods and approaches and how to mix them appropriately. • Methodological 'purists' contend that one should always work within a single paradigm. • It is more expensive and time consuming. • There are challenges in balancing/assessing the outcomes of qualitative and quantitative data analysis at the interpretation and theorisation stages.

6.10 Mixed Methods Strategy

Once it has been decided that a study is going to use mixed methods, the next step is to determine the parameters of the mixed methods strategy (Creswell, 2011). Creswell (2009) has identified six strategies that can be followed in a mixed methods study: (1) sequential explanatory strategy; (2) sequential exploratory strategy; (3) sequential transformative strategy; (4) concurrent triangulation strategy; (5) concurrent nested strategy; and (6) concurrent transformative strategy (see (Creswell, 2009, pp. 211-216). These strategies have different designs depending on a number of factors: Creswell (2011) isolated four factors that influence the selection of an appropriate strategy for a mixed approach. First, it must be established whether quantitative or qualitative methods will be given priority, or whether both will be treated equally. Next, it must be determined how data collection will be implemented (sequentially or simultaneously). Thirdly, the manner of data analysis must be selected (integrated or separate), and finally, the researcher must decide in which phase of research the two types of data formats might mix (during data collection, data analysis or interpretation) (pp. 539-540).

The nature of the present study made the adoption of a concurrent triangulation strategy necessary. In this strategy, one form of data collection has strengths which offset weaknesses in the other, providing a comprehensive analysis of the topic under scrutiny. The researcher collects both types of data simultaneously or concurrently during the study, then integrates information from both and compares them in order to interpret the overall results (Creswell, 2009, Creswell, 2011). In this instance, the most significant reason for choosing this strategy in this research was the necessity of viewing the issues from different angles at the same time. In addition, it provided the researcher with the opportunity to combine the advantages of both forms of data; in as much as quantitative data provides for generalisation, while the qualitative data provides in-depth information on the issues under study (Creswell, 2011).

In the fieldwork, data was collected from the case study university in order to answer the following subsidiary operational questions:

1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?
2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?

3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

Vaus (2001) pointed out that the selection of any data collection method is based upon a number of factors, including the size of the study population, the required sample population size, whether the sample is in one place or spread across several, the time and resources available, and the extent to which the material being collected is sensitive (p. 187).

Each data collection method has specific characteristics which must be tailored towards answering the research question. Dawson (2007) argues that qualitative research methods help to explore the attitudes, behaviours, experiences, and opinions of individuals more fully, through, for example, interviews and focus groups. Usually, a small number of people participate in a study, but contact with each participant could mean that the study takes a long time. On the other hand, quantitative methods produce data, using methods like questionnaires. This type of information gathering tool can be disseminated among a large number of people. Contact with the participants, however, is much more restricted than in a qualitative data collection method (p. 16).

In this study, data was collected both quantitatively and qualitatively by three types of instrumentation: (1) a questionnaire; (2) semi-structured interviews; and (3) focus group discussions. These methods were applied simultaneously to create a comprehensive overview of the phenomena, from both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives, in order to tackle the problem of generalisability for qualitative research and to build a better understanding of the relationship between research variables (Morrison, 2007, p. 31).

6.11 Data Collection Instruments

6.11.1 The Questionnaire

Henerson et al. (1987) argues that the questionnaire is one of the most suitable and valuable data collection tools to survey and establish the attitudes of individuals (pp. 28, 29). The questionnaire is an attractive collection instrument for researchers because of its low cost, minimal resource requests and the ability to gather data from a large sample (Brewerton and Millward, 2001, p. 99).

In the present research, a questionnaire was developed by reviewing relevant existing literature, the findings of the scoping study and the official handbook of QA systems published by National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment, KSA (NCAAA, 2011).

6.11.1.1 Constructing the Questionnaire

There are many types of question, each best suited for different purposes (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 317). In this study, closed and open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire. Closed questions are easy to process and can be answered easily, quickly, without extended writing, with low resource costs and comparisons can easily be made between the responses (Oppenheim, 2001, p. 114). This type of questioning can encourage honesty as it is anonymous. All participants respond to exactly the same question, in order to eliminate bias. In general, the gathered data can be analysed and interpreted more easily than the data collected from oral responses (Henerson et al., 1987, pp. 28, 29). However, there are some pitfalls in terms of closed questions. They do not enable participants to express what they think, nor can respondents add any notes or explanations (Oppenheim, 2001, p. 114). Henerson et al. (1987) argues that the questionnaire method is inflexible when it comes to the exploration of an idea or comment; furthermore, this method may limit those individuals who can express themselves better orally (p. 29).

On the other hand, open-ended questions provide an opportunity for respondents to write and explain their answers without restrictions or pre-limited categories of response. However, open-ended questions could lead to a higher proportion of irrelevant or redundant data. This type of information may extend the collection phase and make analysis more difficult (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 321)

Robson (2002) highlights that questionnaire questions are "designed to help achieve the goals of the research and, in particular, to answer the research questions," (p. 241). Accordingly, to explore the perspectives of faculty members towards the issues under consideration, a questionnaire was designed, which included four sections. The following table (6.4) shows the questionnaire sections, dimensions of the questionnaire, sources used to generate questions and their purposes within the study.

Table 6. 4 The questionnaire sections and dimensions

Sections	Dimensions	No. of Items
First/ Personal Information	The data collected from this section helped identify differences between stakeholders' perspectives toward the case study issues, based on their nationality, gender, occupation and the existence of experience in QA.	4
Second/ Engagement in QAP	*First Dimension:* Stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QAP. Statements were developed based on the official Handbook by NCAAA (2011). The researcher reviewed the handbook and retrieved the tasks that faculty members are supposed to do for 'full engagement' in the QA operation. The purpose of this was to establish to what extant stakeholders engage in QAPs across different levels of the institution.	14
	Second Dimension: Operational issues in the development of QAP. Statements were developed from the literature of QA and from the scoping study findings. The purpose here is to rank the main issues confronting stakeholders in the operation of QAPs.	10
Third/ E-management and QAP	*First Dimension:* Stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward e-management in the QAP.	14
	Second Dimension: Institutional readiness with regards to e-management in the operation of QAP. In this section, statements were developed from the literature of e-management and from the scoping study findings. Here, the intention was to explore stakeholders' perspectives toward the potential of e-management in the operation of QAP, and the readiness of the case study university to take advantage of e-management in QAP.	5
Fourth/ Open-ended Questions	This section provided six lines to record any challenges they confront in the operation of QAP, to provide any recommendations overcoming challenges, and, finally, to comment on any aspect of this research.	3

The Likert Scale was used to mark the statements arising from the questionnaire. This scale was originally invented by R. Likert in 1932 as a tool to discover the strength of attitudes toward particular statements. Likert suggested that the higher the category chosen, the greater the strength of agreement (Bell, 2005, p. 142). The scale was adapted for this study in the following format: five levels of agreement, namely, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The participants were asked to draw a symbol (✓) on their choice (See Appendix 6. A, B).

6.11.1.2 Piloting the Questionnaire

Cohen et al. (2007) asserts that phrasing of the questionnaire is of paramount significance and that to test it in advance is vital to its success (p. 341). Piloting helps with many aspects: the wording of questions, the design of its introduction, the order of the questions and their sequence, and the reduction of non-responder rates. It is argued that, although the piloting stage can be costly and time-consuming, ignoring it may be more costly (Oppenheim, 2001, p. 47).

In this study, the questionnaire was piloted to check how long was required to complete it, whether the instructions were clear, clarity of questions, whether there were any objections to any of the questions, whether any significant topic been omitted, whether the design of the questionnaire was attractive, and, lastly, to ask for feedback (Bell, 2005, pp. 147, 148). The piloting was carried out in three phases:

- After the questionnaire had been developed, it was sent to three experts : two with positions in QA in HE and one who works with information management systems. These experts were asked to help check the relevance of the statements to the context, sections and research topic, and to note if anything had not been addressed. Some adjustments were made to the questionnaire, based on feedback provided, which helped to strengthen its validity.
- The latest version of the questionnaire was then translated from English to Arabic and sent to two specialists in Arabic to verify the structure and meaning of the statements. This was to ensure the meaning had not changed during translation. Minor adjustments were made after discussions with the specialists via Skype.
- At this stage, the questionnaire was distributed, in both English and Arabic, to volunteer PhD students at The University of Glasgow and to some faculty members from Saudi universities other than the case study university. They were asked to fill

in the questionnaire and comment on any aspect of the questionnaire, such as the instructions, clarity and the length. No changes were necessary after this stage as all the volunteers agreed the questionnaire was clear and could measure what it was intended to measure.

- The final version of the questionnaire was then prepared to be distributed as hard copies. Furthermore, to ensure a high rate of response (and therefore increase generalisability), an online questionnaire was also designed through Google Forms. To ensure the readiness of the online version, the form was tested by sending the link to PhD students to check the language, the sequence of questions and how the pages flowed.

6.11.1.3 Procedures of Collecting Questionnaire Data

Punch and Oancea (2014), highlighted three points that need to be considered while undertaking any research. First, in order to ensure the cooperation of a large number of participants and high data quality, the sample must be selected professionally. Participants must be also be aware of the research purpose and its context, the extent of data confidentiality and anonymity, the type of information required and the clarity of data collecting procedures. Secondly, data collection procedures should be controlled by the researcher, as far as this is possible. If it is necessary to hire another person to collect the required volume of data, this person must be fully trained in the collection procedures. Lastly, the possibility of a low response rate must be kept in mind. A contingency procedural plan must be designed that can be implemented, where necessary, to maximize the number of responses (pp. 492, 494).

In the present study, the questionnaire phase adhered to the following procedure:

- Once the questionnaire was formulated, approval was sought and obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Social Science College of The University of Glasgow, and similarly from the case study university, who provided written consent to conduct the study and provide access to required resources and services.
- The IT Deanship at the study university was contacted; they agreed to send the link to the questionnaire to faculty members' emails. The university was extremely cooperative to the extent that they also sent a reminder to faculty members after three weeks.

- More than 400 hard copies were distributed, fairly and randomly, to faculty members in all colleges, management teams and centres in the university. Taking into account the cultural boundaries, the researcher distributed the questionnaire in male sectors of the university, while a female colleague was given training on the questionnaire and distributed the questionnaire to the female sectors.
- The questionnaire was offered in both Arabic and English, with a plain language statement.
- The instructions on the cover page stipulated that participants gave consent to take part in the research by completing the questionnaire. They were also instructed not to write their name on the questionnaire.
- Each questionnaire was distributed with an envelope with the researcher's address printed on the front; instructions on the cover page indicated where participants could drop the envelope in.
- To avoid duplicate responses, the cover page of the questionnaire contained the following proviso: "If you have been involved in the electronic questionnaire, you do not need to fill this questionnaire." A similar proviso was included in the instructions for the online version.

6.11.1.4 The Questionnaire Participants

The number of full responses received via both the hard copies and online version was 301. The responses represent 17.52% of the total number of members of the research population in the case study university. The following tables show the distribution of participants based on their nationality, gender, occupation and experience.

Table 6. 5 Number of responses by nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Saudi	153	50.8
Non-Saudi	148	49.2
Total	301	100.0

Table 6. 6 Number of responses by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	154	51.2
Female	147	48.8
Total	301	100.0

Table 6. 7 Number of responses by occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Faculty member only	210	69.8
Administrator	40	13.3
QA Member	51	16.9
Total	301	100.0

Table 6. 8 Number of responses by experience in QAP

Experience	Frequency	Percent
No Experience	97	32.2
Has Experience	204	67.8
Total	301	100.0

6.11.1.5 The Questionnaire: Data Analysis

Data collected during the questionnaire phase of the study were analysed using the SPSS statistical package, a Windows-based software that is one of the most common data analysis tools used in educational research (Muijs, 2011). Descriptive statistics were applied in order to assess the data. Responses were differentiated based on the participants' nationality, gender, occupation and experience. For the three open-ended questions, the majority of responses were in Arabic, hence, they required to be translated to English, then analysed in the same way as the qualitative data.

6.11.2 The Interview

Yin (2014) asserted that interviews are one of the most important sources of data in a case study, especially since most case studies investigate human affairs (p. 168). Bush (2012) notes that "unstructured or semi-structured interviews are often used by interpretive researchers and assume greater diversity in both the design and use of the research instrument and in the nature of responses from participants," (p. 78).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to collect qualitative data from key groups of stakeholders in the case study university. Semi-structured interviews are one of the common forms of data collection in education research (Punch and Oancea, 2014, p. 327).

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher sets up a general framework in advance, which defines the issue to be covered and generates a list of key questions. This allows greater flexibility in determining and modifying the details of structure during the interview. The participant can answer at some length in their own way, and a researcher can use multiple types of questions to ask for clarification or expansion, such as "prompts, probes and follow up," (Drever, 1995, p. 1). In addition, by using this instrument, specific information can be sought that can be compared and contrasted with information from other interviews. To ensure parity, the same questions were asked of all participants. The distinction of semi-structured interview lies in providing the researcher with sufficient flexibility to deal with information that arises during interviews (Dawson, 2007, p. 29). However, there are some disadvantages of semi-structured interviews. For example, it may be tempting to spend a long time talking about marginal issues, there is a risk of losing control of the participant, and sometimes the unstructured method can be less reliable (Brewerton and Millward, 2001, p. 70).

One of the key issues for conducting any interview is whether or not it can be recorded. While the use of a recording device could make it easier for the researcher to record data more accurately than by making notes, Yin (2014) points out that the recording device should not be used if a participant refuses or feels uncomfortable in its presence; it should also be avoided if the researcher possesses no clear plan to deal with the huge amount of data generated from recordings, the researcher has insufficient experience in using the device, and finally, if a researcher believes that the recording is a substitute for listening (pp. 164-165).

6.11.2.1 Constructing and Piloting Interview Questions

The purpose of semi-structured interviews in this research was threefold: i.e. to gather data providing insight into the perspectives, beliefs and experiences of members of staff with responsibility within the operation of aspects of the QA operations at the case study university; to explore in depth the issues confronting the stakeholders' engagement within the process of QA and to discover the potential contribution of e-management to the QA operations.

Coleman (2012) points out that questions asked, or topics covered in interviews, usually arise from the main questions of the study, which are identified in advance. It is important to limit the number of questions until the duration of the interview has been agreed upon

with the interviewee (p. 260). Accordingly, the interview schedule in this study was designed based on the literature review and scoping study findings. In this instance, it included ten main questions, with sub-questions that were carefully designed to contribute to the research aims. The following table (6.9) shows briefly how the interview questions linked to the research questions.

Operational Research Questions	Interviews Questions
1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?	1. Can you explain briefly what QA means to you? 2. Can you describe any aspects of the QAPs that you are aware of in this University? 3. How well do you think faculty members participate in the QAPs? 4. Is there any particular staff development required by stakeholders to participate effectively in the QAPs?
2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?	5. Are you aware of any difficulties or challenges that reduce the level of engagement in the QAPs?
3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?	6. Are there information and communication centres in the university? 7. Could you explain briefly what you would understand by the idea of e-management? 8. (If Yes) What services do you think e-management applications could provide to enhance or improve the operation of QAPs? 9. (If Yes) Are there any challenges that hinder the use or establishment of e-management system to operate QAPs?

Table 6. 9 Linkage between research questions and the interview questions

Coleman (2012) emphasises the importance of piloting the interview schedule with a small number of people in order to verify that the questions are relevant to the focus of the study, are clear, understandable and manageable within the agreed time. Wording interviews questions clearly and simply, avoiding leading questions and ambiguity are also crucial issues which need to be taken into account in shaping the interview schedule (p. 260). For piloting the interview structure, the following procedures were adopted:

1. After interview questions were formulated, three experts – two in the fields of QA and educational management in HE and one in information management systems – were approached. They checked the relevance of the questions to the research objectives, the clarity of the questions, and were asked to identify anything they felt had been omitted. Some adjustments were made, based on their feedback, in order to strengthen the validity of the interview questions.
2. The interview questions were composed in English then translated into Arabic. Improvements were made to the interview questions based on the feedback of two specialists in Arabic, which helped to ensure the clarity of meaning had been maintained during translation.
3. At this stage, interview sessions were conducted with two volunteer PhD students at The University of Glasgow and two faculty members from Saudi universities other than the case study university. At the end of these sessions, volunteers were asked for any comment. All volunteers agreed the interview schedule was understandable and the length was reasonable.

6.11.2.2 Procedures for Collecting Interview Data

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 key stakeholders in order to gather data providing insight into their perceptions, beliefs and experiences relating to the research aims. Depending on several factors, the procedure for conducting an interview can be different from one interviewee to another because of gender, occupation and time limitations. However, the main procedures can be outlined as follows:

- Approval for conducting the interview component of this study was sought and obtained from the College Ethics Committee of The University of Glasgow, and from the case study university.
- 26 stakeholders were invited to take a part in a face-to-face interview (for male participants) or by phone (for female participants). They were invited in several different ways by either visiting their offices, via email or telephone. Participants

were given a general overview of the purpose of the research and the procedure of the interview session, including making clear that they would be recorded if they gave consent. The following table (6.10) shows the numbers of acceptances.

Table 6. 10 Number of stakeholders who accepted the invitation to interview

Male	19	**Female**	7
Invitations accepted by	18	**Invitations accepted by**	5
Recording accepted by	15	**Recording accepted by**	5
Making notes with	18	**Making notes with**	5
Method	Face to face	**Method**	Telephone
Total		23	

- Those stakeholders who accepted the invitation had a range of responsibilities in the operation of QA and e-management systems. They represent three key groups, with a wide diversity of roles and responsibilities. Each participant represents a different department of the institution. As previously discussed, the researcher has decided, from an ethical perspective, not to provide identifiable information, such as the department affiliations of the participant, in order to protect the participants from recognition (see table 6.11).

Table 6. 11 The key groups and occupations of interview participants

Management Stakeholder	**Quality Assurance Stakeholder**	**Internal and External Stakeholder**
Senior Management Members	Managers of QA and Accreditation Offices	Internal Expert of Information Management Systems
Deans of Colleges	Members of QA Offices	Internal Expert of Education Management
Deans of Deanships	Members of QA and Accreditation Committees	External Expert of Quality at the Ministry of Education
Deputies of Colleges and Deanships	Members of the Institutional Strategic Plan Committee	External Expert of QA and Accreditation at NCAAA
Total		
12	7	4

- Male participants who accepted the initial invitation were contacted to negotiate the location and time for their interview. At the times agreed, the researcher met all male participants in their offices. Female participants were interviewed by telephone, based on their availability.
- A brief presentation about the research purpose and objectives was given in the first five minutes of each interview session. All participants had a chance to query any aspect of the research before questioning began. In addition, plain language statements in both Arabic and English were prepared and given to all male participants before starting the interview (Appendix 4. A, B). As the female participants were interviewed by phone, the researcher read the whole statement aloud before starting the questions; female interviewees were also invited to query any part of the statement.
- Consent forms were prepared in both Arabic and English and given directly to all male participants to sign prior to the commencement of each interview (Appendix 5. A, B). Similarly, consent forms were sent to all female participants via email, prior to the commencement of each interview.
- The researcher ensured that all participants understood their right to withdraw from participation in the study during or after the interview.
- The interviews were planned to last for 45 minutes, with the possibility of extension with the permission and agreement of the interviewee. A few interviews were extended to about one hour.

In general, the interviews were conducted in comfortable environments with little interruptions. There was a high level of trust between the researcher and participants, which allow them to talk confidently and without any concern. One challenge faced during the interview stage was arranging meeting times with people in high level positions – because they hold many roles, they naturally had multiple demands on their time.

6.11.3 The Focus Groups

Focus groups (or discussion groups) consist of a group of people who discuss a specific case together at a particular place and time. In this model, the researcher takes on the role of a moderator or facilitator by asking specific questions; the goal is to stimulate debate, ensuring the opportunity for everyone to contribute (Dawson, 2007, p. 31). Bloor et al. (2001) highlighted the ability of the focus group model to integrate with other methods when a study uses multiple methods of data collection, usually termed ‘triangulation’, but

it is important to note that focus groups alone are not a reliable validation for the findings of other methods. Nevertheless, when used as part of an integrated study, focus groups still may offer useful avenues of exploration to the researcher in the interpretation and criticism of the results of other tools, such as the survey results (p. 17).

The selection of focus group participants was not 'systematic random sampling'. Bloor et al. (2001) highlighted a number of issues in the selection of focus group participants:

- The decision to invite participants into the group is linked to the purpose of the group, the characteristics of its members and the relationship of individuals to the study. This is therefore reflected in the nature of the data that is collected and how this can be adapted to the research purpose.
- The number of participants in the group also reflects the nature of the subject of the study and the characteristics of individuals. A number of researchers prefer smaller groups because they allow sufficient time for participants to discuss and express their views.
- Access to more in-depth information on the research subject requires a comfortable environment for participants. It is better therefore to avoid a group consisting of very diverse individuals or those who have conflicting views (Bloor et al., 2001, pp. 19, 35).

Dawson (2007) outlined several strengths and weakness of conducting focus groups. In focus group discussions a wide range of data can be gathered over the course of one meeting. Participants can question each other which reduces the impact of researcher bias. The ensuing interaction between participants can be useful when analyzing the data (p. 31). On the other hand, focus groups can be difficult if some participants feel nervous, uncomfortable or are not keen to contribute. Furthermore, for several reasons – such as financial cost or the circumstances of the research context – it may be difficult for a researcher to arrange suitable places for a focus group meeting, or to record proceedings (Dawson, 2007, p. 31).

6.11.3.1 Constructing and Piloting Focus Group Questions

In this particular research, focus groups were conducted through the complementary method of data collection (Bloor et al., 2001). Directed by the results of the literature

review and scoping study, nine questions were formulated to explore the perceptions, experience and beliefs of elite QA stakeholders with regards to several issues such as:

1. The development of the QA operations at the university since its inception several years ago.
2. Whether any elements of QAP are missing and thus leading to challenges.
3. The main challenges confronting the operation of QAP.
4. The enhancement of stockholders' engagement in the operation of QAP.
5. The potential role of e-management applications in enhancing or improving the operation of QAP.

The piloting stage of the focus group schedule followed a similar procedure to the piloting of the interview schedule. Minor adjustments were made based on the comments and suggestions provided by experts in the fields of QA, e-management systems and Arabic language specialists. Added to this, a focus group session was conducted with three volunteer PhD students at The University of Glasgow in order to check the clarity of questions, the length of time provided, and to experience the administration and structure of the focus group.

6.11.3.2 Procedures for Collecting Focus Group Data

The focus group discussions were conducted thus:

- Similar to the rest of the research instruments in this research, the focus group structure was approved by the College Ethics Committee of the College of Social Science of the University of Glasgow and by the case study university.
- Through a variety of methods (visits, email and telephone), fourteen males and females from various levels of the authority structure of the QA system in the university were invited to engage in focus group discussions. However, only five males and four females agreed to join the sessions. The two groups comprising elite QA stakeholders (officers and members of Development and QA deanship, managers and members of QA offices and related committees).
- Due to time constraints, two separate focus groups were conducted: one for males and another for female staff. The university provided a comfortable meeting room in which to conduct the session with male participants, including a video conference system used to communicate with female participants. The female staff

were able to watch and listen to the researcher. However, in line with the cultural context, the researcher was unable to watch them.

- In both sessions, the researcher gave a brief presentation about the research purpose and objectives. A plain language statement was offered to all participants along with sufficient time to query any aspect of the focus group format. The researcher ensured that all participants had understood and signed the consent form and all agreed to the discussions being audio recorded (Appendix 4. A, B, Appendix 5. A, B).
- The researcher treated all participants in a friendly manner, encouraging them to express their thoughts freely. The researcher took the role of a moderator during the discussion, allowing participants to ask each other questions, while keeping the focus on the research concerns and, at the conclusion of the focus group, summarised and reviewed the key points raised.

6.11.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Planning an analysis of the data depends largely on the overall approach of a research project, the expected outcomes or the purpose of analysis. This study focused on inductive analysis which principally has a descriptive and exploratory orientation. In an exploratory approach, before any analysis takes place, the researcher reads the data carefully several times, searching for key words, patterns, ideas and themes that outline the analysis (Guest et al., 2011, p. 7).

The qualitative data in this research was obtained from three sources: open-ended questions in the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was applied to the three types of qualitative data separately. This is considered one of the most common methods associated with an exploratory approach (Guest et al., 2011, p. 36). Boyatzis (1998) stated that "thematic analysis enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organisations" (p. 5).

In light of the previous literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Namey et al., 2008, Boyatzis, 1998), several phases of thematic analysis were applied to the qualitative data in this research. Initially, the researcher transcribed the data in Arabic, which was then translated into English and revised by a professional translator. To gain familiarity with the data, the

transcription was read and re-read and initial ideas were noted down. After that, the researcher tracked interesting characteristics in a systematic fashion across the whole of data, giving each characteristic a code and collecting data relevant to each code. All relevant codes were gathered into potential themes. The themes were checked to ensure the coded extracts generated a thematic 'map' of the analysis. Following this, ongoing analysis refined the specifics of each theme, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. The final stage led to the production of a report by setting out a summary of all the issues related to each theme, with a selection of compelling representative quotes.

6.12 Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are vital issues in any research design, in both quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133). In qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and extent of the data achieved, the extent of triangulation and the honesty and expertise of the researcher (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 161, Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133). Similarly, the validity of quantitative data can be improved through careful sampling and the use of appropriate instruments and statistical treatments (Cohen et al., 2007). In the present study, the validity of data collection instruments were assessed and were found to measure what they were intended to measure. This means that the tools were judged by specialists and those concerned in the research subject as being valid. The comments and recommendation of experts in the field have been taken into account in the adjustment and improvement of all the instruments used herein.

The objective of reliability in a case study, as Yin (1994) suggests, is to ensure that "if a later investigator followed exactly the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusion," (p. 146). With this in mind, and to minimize possible error or bias, three different data collection tools were applied: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire included closed and open-ended questions to ensure more accurate and in-depth answers. The study included all members of the research population, which was useful for generalizability. The sample consisted of a wide variety of nationalities, languages, genders, disciplines, academic positions and roles. Moreover, the reliability of the questionnaire was verified through evaluating internal consistency through the alpha coefficient. The widely used procedure measures the homogeneity and how closely linked a set of items are as a group. The questionnaire is

internally consistent, as it achieved Cronbach's Alpha .930. The sample population for the qualitative data instruments (semi-structured and focus groups) were taken from three different stakeholder groups (management, QA, experts of QA, IMS and educational management), which provided access to different points of view and a variety of rich perspectives regarding issues discussed in the study.

6.13 Research Ethics

The ethics of social research require sufficient awareness and consideration on the part of researchers prior to the study beginning, through its development and after its conclusion. Ethical challenges can arise in all research designs, methods and approaches (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Cohen et al. (2007) and Punch and Oancea (2014) point out that these ethical issues may be raised at several stages of research and can arise from the nature or choice of the research topic, the context of the research, the nature of the participants and the ways in which data collection and analysis were undertaken.

In the context of this research, it was necessary for the researcher to work closely with the participants during data collection procedures. Interviews, focus groups and the questionnaire were conducted in natural settings and participants were asked to share insights into QA issues and their practices, based upon their own experiences, within the specific context in which they work. Working closely with participants led to a greater understanding of the complexity of their situation than would have been possible with a simple exploration of the surface features of the issue. Griffiths (1998) states that:

> Bias comes not from having ethical and political positions – this is inevitable – but from not acknowledging them. Not only does such acknowledgment help to unmask any bias that is implicit in those views, but it helps to provide a way of responding critically and sensitively to the research. (P.133).

As a researcher I have recognized that it is impossible to separate myself from the research, thus, my own background might shape the interpretation of the data, and I have acknowledged how the interpretation of the data may flow from my assumptions, culture, and experiences (Yin, 2011).

There are a number of classification of bias types that can arise when applying qualitative and quantitative methods in research (Oppenheim, 2001, Gray, 2004, Cohen et al., 2007,

Yin, 2011). For instance, Norris (1997) and Smith and Noble (2014) outlined some of the main types of bias in research as being: design bias, selection participant bias, data collection and measurement bias and analysis bias. Norris (1997) emphasised that:

> …the problem is that while it is easy to label potential sources of bias it is not possible to construct rules for judging the validity of particular studies or domains of inquiry. Nor is it possible to specify procedures which if followed will systematically eliminate bias and error. We need, therefore, to think of the social processes that might keep research honest and fair and enhance its quality" (p.174).

Relying exclusively on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the reality being explored (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, in this research, to minimize possible error or bias in the research design, three different data collection instruments were applied: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire also included closed and open-ended questions; this was to ensure that I obtain accurate and in-depth rich data about individuals' experiences and perspectives on the research issues. This was a valuable approach for increasing confidence that the data generated are not dependent on one specific data collection method. The questions within all the methods used to collect data were designed and constructed drawing on the literature around how to prepare instruments objectively (Oppenheim, 2001, Robson, 2002, Bell, 2005, Cohen et al., 2007, Bloor et al., 2001, Dawson, 2007, Drever, 1995). Moreover, a number of procedures were conducted to assess the validity and reliability of all instruments (see section 6.12).

The study included all members of the research population, which was useful for minimising the bias of data and for generalizability. The sample consisted of a wide variety of nationalities, languages, genders, disciplines, academic positions and roles. In addition, although I have my own perspective about the issues being explored, equality and honesty were significant principles in participation. For instance, when I offered opportunities for participation, I did not deliberately interview people who might hold either the same or different views related to the issues of this study. Moreover, I have tried to avoid biasing my study by choosing only those sources that confirm my own preconceptions. It is suggested that researchers investigating sensitive topics have to be acutely percipient of the situation themselves (Cohen et al., 2007). This research explores a sensitive issue in the field of HE where I work as a lecturer at one of its institutions. The sensitivity stems from

the importance of QA in HEIs reputation and because I was asking colleagues in this field about their roles and perceptions in the QA operation. My focus was to make sense of the opinions participants have about the issues under discussion. I was aware of the importance of treating all participants equally, being objective and ensuring that the dialogue and my relationship with the participants has as little impact as possible at every stage of the data collection procedures, data analysis or interpretation, or upon the participants themselves.

In the data collection stage, not following the exact same approach in conducting the qualitative methods was another bias challenge caused by the social culture; this could not be avoided. Because of cultural limitations it was impossible to meet the female participants face-to-face. To minimise the bias and any kind of influence, the female participants were given full freedom to participate or not and to choose the way of communication. The rest of procedures have applied for both genders (see sections 6.11.1.3, 6.11.2.2 and 6.11.3.2). The exact wording and sequence of questions were formed in advance and all participants in qualitative and quantitative methods were asked the same questions in the same order (Gray, 2004, Cohen et al., 2007, Yin, 2011). Cohen et al., 2007 suggests that even non-verbal communication may be critical in interviewing people. Thus, I was conscious not to provide the participants with any hint of judgement, support or condemnation on the issues under exploration. In focus groups there was the challenge that a few over-talkative participants could influence the reticent ones. An appropriate polite but firm style was followed to control the over-talkative persons and to encourage the reticent ones. This was applied while attempting to avoid influencing and biasing the group's discussion (Yin, 2011). In addition, participants were allowed to question each other to reduce the impact of researcher bias (Dawson, 2007). I was ready, however, to decide whether their questions helped keep the discussion focused on the related issue, or they were hindering the focus. If the latter was happening then I immediately intervened to attempt to return the discussion to the right path (Yin, 2011).

To minimize bias in analyzing and reporting data, I attempted to consciously hold to what the data highlighted and did not deliberately search for data that confirmed my personal experience or beliefs. The conclusions reached in this research were based on multiple sources of data. Triangulation was employed as a way to avoid or minimize bias.

In order to address the ethical issues, this study also applied several procedures at both official and personal levels, in order to protect participants' rights and to follow the regulations of official organisations rules:

- According to the procedures followed in the College of Social Sciences of the University of Glasgow, it is necessary to submit an application for ethical approval. Two approvals from the College Ethics Committee have been obtained to conduct this study, the first one for the scoping study was on 17.07.2013, and the second one for the main study was on 27.09.2014.
- This study was conducted at a university in KSA; for this, the regulations require the submission of several documents to obtain approval for the purposes of conducting the research and gathering data, such as: the research proposal, a time plan of the fieldwork and the approval of supervisors. The case study university agreed to allow the researcher to communicate with individuals in the study population, and facilitate the process of data collection.
- To explain the purpose of the study, two versions of plain language statements were prepared; one for those invited to participate in the interviews and focus groups, and another for questionnaire participants. Moreover, because most of the individuals in the university are natives of Arabic speaking countries, two copies of the statements were provided in both Arabic and English. The plain statements included information about the purpose of the study, reasons for the participants to volunteer, the way a participant would provide information and assurances that personal information would be kept confidential (Appendix 4. A, B and 7. A, B).
- Explicit consent was required for the stakeholders to volunteer for the study. In the consent letter, which was read and signed by all participants, it was stressed that participation was voluntary and the participant had the right to withdraw at any time (Appendix 5. A, B).
- The participants of the interviews and focus groups were informed that the discussions would be audio-recorded using a Sony Handy Recorder. All focus group members and most interview participants gave their consent; those who did not agree to be recorded gave permission for the researcher to make notes on their responses (Appendix 5. A, B).
- Participants' names were not recorded. Codes and numbers were used to identify individuals so that no one, other than the researcher, can identify the identity of any participant. In addition, data was organised using a code of numbers and letters (the

key to which was password protected and stored along with the data on a computer drive at the University of Glasgow). On completion of the thesis, and after the period required by the University, this data will be erased.

6.14 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of the research. Elements of the research design and methodology were also reviewed.

In order to explain the components and characteristics of the context of the study, this chapter provided a brief overview of the case study university, its organisational structure and related Deanships. Since the scoping study conducted at the beginning of this project had a big role in the formulation of the research question and objectives, this chapter presented a summary of the procedures followed and findings of the scoping study.

Chapter six also presented detailed information pertaining to the methodology and tools used for data collection, and further examined why the case study was adopted as an appropriate methodology to investigate of the research question. In addition, the mixed methods approach adopted in collecting evidence and data from several sources was discussed in relation to the application of three tools for data collection in this study, in order to ensure the credibility of the data collected and to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This chapter also presented details of the procedures followed in the composition, piloting and application of research instruments for this study. In addition, the issues of validity, reliability and research ethics were discussed. In subsequent chapters, seven and eight, the qualitative and quantitative research data are presented separately.

Chapter 7: Qualitative Data Analysis

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the qualitative data, gathered using multiple methods. Separate sections for each type of data source (interviews, focus groups, open-ended questions) were developed and the main issues in each section outlined, with illustrative quotes from the data. At all times, an allocated identity title for every respondent (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 1; Male, etc.) was maintained, in order to map out the spread of responses and accurately represent of the views of different participants. In the fieldwork, data was collected from the case study university in order to answer the following guiding questions:

1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?
2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?
3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

7.2 Analysis Stages

The analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken using 'thematic analysis'. This method requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher. It moves beyond counting words and phrases, and focusing on identifying and describing thoughts, whether expressed or implied in the data set, and is concerned with the identification of themes (Namey et al., 2008). Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that *"*a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set*"* (p. 82).

In light of the previous related literature (eg. Braun and Clarke, 2006, Namey et al., 2008, Boyatzis, 1998), the following diagram defines the main phases followed in the analysis of qualitative data from the three sources, which was modified by the researcher:

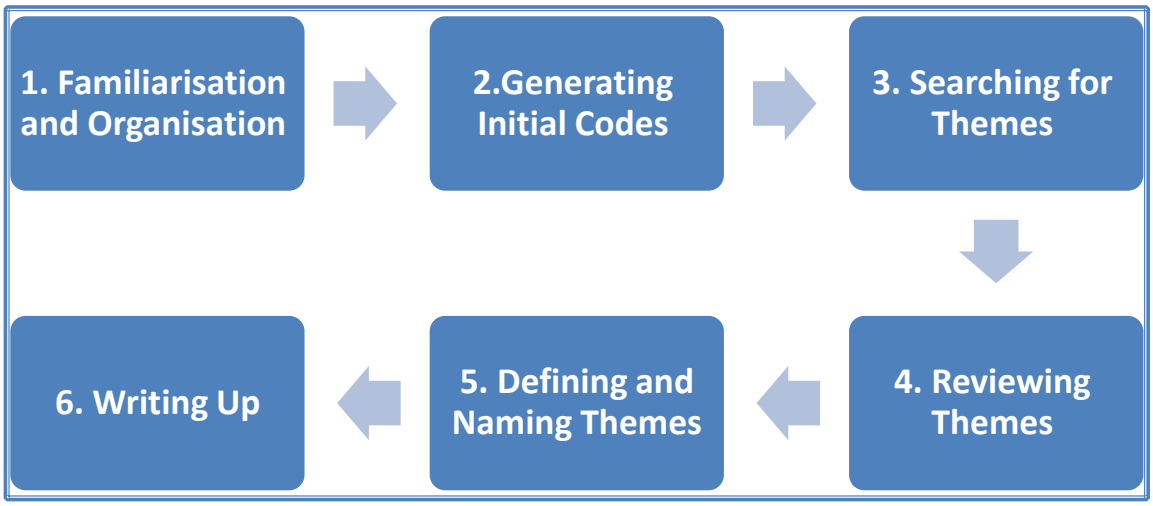

Figure 7. 1 Phases of qualitative data analysis

These stages can be described as follows (Braun and Clarke, 2006):

1. **Familiarisation and organisation:** initially, the researcher listened to verbal data and read the notes and written data collected to immerse himself in the dataset. Most of the verbal and written data collected was in Arabic, all data were transcribed in Arabic and then translated to English by the researcher; this has provided the researcher with a great opportunity to become familiar with the data and develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions. The transcription was read and re-read, and initial ideas were noted down. The raw data was divided into responses to questions for each data collection method. Tables were used, when applicable, to organise the answers to each question based on the type of participant group, which allowed for later data comparison.
2. **Generating initial codes:** the researcher tracked interesting characteristics in a systematic fashion across the whole dataset to identify important features that might be relevant to answering the research questions, giving each characteristic a code and collecting relevant data extracts.
3. **Searching for themes:** in this phase, all relevant codes were gathered into broader potential themes. This allowed the researcher to work with the data and review the viability of each potential theme.
4. **Reviewing themes:** the themes were checked to ensure the coded extracts generated a thematic 'map' of the analysis. Themes in this phase were refined, which sometimes meant that themes were separated, combined, or discarded.

5. **Defining and naming themes:** ongoing detailed analysis was undertaken to identify the ‘essence’ of each theme, and what aspect of data the theme captured. Clear definitions and names for each theme were generated.
6. **Writing up:** collected data were organised, allowing better understanding and interpretation. Therefore, the final phase is the production of the report by setting out a summary of all the issues related to each theme, with a selection of compelling representative extracts.

7.3 Interview Analysis

This section presents the analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with (23) participants from three groups of stakeholders: management, QA, and internal and external experts. The focus of the interviews was an exploration into stakeholders' perceptions, beliefs and experiences relating to the research issues. It was hoped that the stakeholders would provide their perspectives regarding the reality of QA in HE, for the purpose of overcoming challenges, as well as the exploration of e-management applications and the changes the use of these in the operation of QA in the context of Saudi HEIs. To explore these views and experiences, seven major themes were identified and explored from the literature review and set out in the interview framework (see appendix 2.A, B).

1. Understanding of quality and QA concepts
2. The reality of QA operation
3. Stakeholders' engagement in QA operation
4. Staff development
5. Challenges of engagement
6. Importance of e-management and potential services to QA operation
7. Potential challenges and solutions of applying e-management to QA operation

7.3.1 Understanding of Quality and QA Concepts

Before exploring the reality of the operation of QAP in the case study institution, it is necessary to identify how stakeholders perceive quality and QA. Initially, the respondents gave their general views on and definitions of quality and QA in the field of HE. The participants' responses were analysed, and presented in the following categories.

7.3.1.1 General Views about Quality

A number of management stakeholders asserted the importance of quality and QA in HE. One of management stakeholders believed that, *"Quality is important as it is an Islamic value"* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 1; Male). However, the application of the concept of QA in KSA is still new, and one respondent commented, *"The new concept of QA is a new framework in KSA and is not yet fully applied"* (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 1; Male). Further to this, another management member stressed that universities have a very important role in establishing the concept of excellence and quality in the community when he said, *"A university is supposed to be the best model of development, excellence and quality in the community"* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 1; Male).

Respondents at a managerial level have several views relating to the purpose of QA. Two interviewees commented, *"QA helps to identify an institution's vision. It also helps to identify a path to lead an institution towards achieving its goals,"* (Interview; Respondent: M13; Q. No: 1; Male), while another believed that the main purpose of QA was auditing, and he commented, *"The duty of QA is to audit educational and research efforts, and universities' participation in community service"* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 2; Male). With respect to the relationship of QA to the academic activities, one of the management members believed, *"Quality is related to all academic aspects,"* (Interview; Respondent: M1; Q. No: 1; Male), while another thought, *"it is related to administrative aspects such as strategic planning, institution objectives, evaluation and expectations."* (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 2; Male). However, there are those who believe QA is linked with and targeted to accreditation, and one of them said, *"QA is something that must be achieved to obtain institutional accreditation."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 2; Male).

On the other hand, one of the management members was uncomfortable because of the difficulty of the QAPs. He said, *"It is a complicated and lengthy process,"* (Interview; Respondent: M1; Q. No: 2; Male), whereas a group of managers were more explicitly open about a lack of conviction of the value of QA. One of them considered that planning for quality is a problem in itself; he suggested that *"Planning for quality is a problem... quality must be in the nature of individual work. No one has the right to dictate certain criteria to achieve what is called quality,"* moreover, he showed his rejection of QA and made it clear: *"It is not necessary to follow specific standards that come from any international or*

national bodies to get accreditation; you should have your standards and organise your work to be high quality because it is a part of your religious and societal values." (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 2; Male).

The stakeholders of QA had great faith in the application of QA. One of the interviewees believed that *"It is important to ensure that students have the same quality of education and opportunities inside or outside the country."* (Interview; Respondent: QA4; Q. No: 1; Male). Another added, *"It is important to make sure the educational process is applied according to a specific methodology and standards."* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 1; Male).

From the organisational and practical side, a number of QA stakeholders believe that *"The concept of quality differs from one place to another and it depends on three pillars: the educational institution, the students and the educational resources provided."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 1; Male). In addition, respondents stressed the need to link the process of QA with all processes in the educational institution and its managerial levels, in that: *"QAP all have to be associated with educational process practices."* (Interview; Respondent: QA19; Q. No: 1; Male). Another QA stakeholder stated: *"QA should be linked to all aspects and components of the university management levels."* (Interview; Respondent; QA14; Q. No: 1; Male).

Nevertheless, concerns regarding the reality of implementing QA in practice and the future application of QAP were evident, as one respondent outlined, *"It is easy to have quality, but it is difficult to ensure quality and maintain it for years."* (Interview; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 1; Female).

The third group of respondents were the internal and external experts, who asserted the importance of adopting QA in HEIs. They recommended using all opportunities to enhance the quality of HE, such as applying technology, development training and evaluation processes.

On the other hand, some experts pointed out the importance of considering the identity of the institution and its goals when adopting a QA system. One of the experts stated,

"Each educational institution has its own goals, priorities and programs. Therefore, the assessment of an institution's performance has to be based on what they want to achieve." (Interview; Respondent: E20; Q. No: 1; Male).

7.3.1.2 Quality Assurance Definitions

Regarding the definition of QA in HE, the participants' answers varied between there being no knowledge and there being general and basic knowledge, and some respondents indicated some definitions of QA mentioned in the literature. The following table (7.1) shows some of the definitions mentioned by respondents.

Management Stakeholder	Quality Assurance Stakeholder	Internal & External Experts
• *Ensure good outputs that are compatible with the job market* (Interview; Respondent; M1; Q. No: 3; Male) • *Mastering work whatever your position, to achieve integration between all staff and show the institution works at a high level for the community* (Interview; Respondent; M21; Q. No: 3; Male) • *Measuring the output of education based on international and local standards* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Q. No: 1; Male) • *Ensure the quality of education and its outcomes, according to international standards* (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 3, Male)	• *Ensure the education provided to students is the of best possible quality* (Interview; Respondent; QA19; Q. No: 2; Male) • *Ensure learning plan is achievable* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 2; Male)	• *Ensure work is completed in the manner intended and in a timely manner* (Interview; Respondent: E6; Q. No: 1; Male) • *Methods, techniques and resources must be fit for purpose* (Interview; Respondent: E20; Q. No: 2; Male) • *Good practices and peer review* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 1; Female)

Table 7. 1 QA definitions based on participants' perspectives

The definitions of management stakeholders focused on educational outcomes and the role of QA in ensuring educational outputs are compatible with the requirements of society and the labour market, in addition to achieving international quality standards for education. The QA stakeholders focused on the role of QA in ensuring the quality of education and that education plans are properly implemented in practice, while the definitions of the group of experts were focused on QA and procedures. As shown by the definitions of respondents, there is no deep and comprehensive understanding of the concept and objectives of QA.

7.3.2 The Reality of QA Operation

Exploring the reality of QA operation is vital to understand the nature of the work process and the mechanisms of QA applied in the case study institution. The views of institution staff, their awareness of QAPs and their understanding of their roles and responsibilities together create a picture of the reality of QA operation. In this regard, the participants' responses for this case were analysed and presented in the following sub-themes.

7.3.2.1 Awareness and Understanding of QAP

The data showed the extent of the awareness and understanding of stakeholders of the QAP. There has been an improvement in the awareness and understanding of the QAP, as noted by some of the managers. One of them said, *"I note that the awareness and understanding of QA has improved and increased."* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 3; Male). Despite this, there are those who have basic experience, but still try to practice the process. One of the management stakeholders stated, *"I have a basic knowledge of supervising the process of QA, but I do my best to practice QAPs during my work as a member at the college."* (Interview; Respondent: M8; Q. No: 1; Male).

In relation to the understanding of the work procedures, a number of the management stakeholders indicated a general knowledge of the requirements of QA and their willingness to support the operation. Some of them said, *"I have a good knowledge of QA,"* (Interview; Respondent; M3; Q. No: 4; Male), while other interviewees said, *"I support the dissemination of quality culture."* (Interview; Respondent: M9; Q. No: 1; Male). Moreover, there were those who believed they had a wide knowledge of QAP; one of them make it clear: *"I know the details of QAPs and I can provide what the college needs."* (Interview; Respondent: M12; Q. No: 1; Male). Another management stakeholder added more detail, *"I know that we need to collect data and documents, information and*

evidence, and there are forms that need to be filled in and then delivered to the QA office." (Interview; Respondent: M1; Q. No: 4; Male).

The responses of QA stakeholder showed that a number of them have a good knowledge of and long experience in the operation of QAP, where some of them said *"I have a long experience of QA and accreditation issues,"* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 3; Male), another one commented, *"I was a supervisor of the QA office in the girls' section for about 4 years."* (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 1; Female). In addition, respondents emphasised the increase in the awareness and understanding of QAP in recent years. One interviewee thought, *"The staff has sufficient understanding of QA and I think the university passed the stage of spreading QA concepts."* (Interview; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 2; Female). Perhaps the reason for this is the availability of training programs for the instruction of quality experts. This was confirmed by one of the QA team, who said, *"Now, we have experts – the majority of them non-Saudi – who have attended training and workshops as a condition to be a member of the QA office… they also have a great awareness of QA standards, supervised by NCAAA."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 2; Male).

7.3.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

The majority of the interviewees in three stakeholder groups stated their roles and responsibilities clearly, based on their relationship with QA. This shows that they are aware of their duties, and as some respondents discussed it, it may be supposed that they know what to do to accomplish them. The following table (7.2) presents a summary of respondents' roles and responsibilities.

Table 7. 2 Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

Management Stakeholder	Quality Assurance Stakeholder	Internal & External Experts
• Developing the strategic and evaluation plans • Coordinating and following up the implementation of QA requirements • Providing support to solve the challenges that face the stakeholders in relation to QAP • Offering support to the QA office • Monitoring the office of QA to ensure that everything is going according to plan	• Spreading the culture of QA among employees of the university • Preparing the faculty and students to accept the concepts of accreditation and quality standards • Engaging staff in the process of QA and explaining its mechanisms to achieve QA standards • Leading the team who provide support to establish QA offices in girls' sections • Documenting and reporting the processes of Development and QA deanship • Maintaining and meeting the requirements of QA standards based on the plan	• Managing communication between the university administration and the QA office at the college • Cooperate with national quality councils as an expert • Cooperate with QA committees as an expert • Train institution staff to achieve the requirements of QAP • Coordinating and following up the QAP in a college

It is clear from the above table (7.2) that management stakeholders' roles and responsibilities concentrate on development plans, coordinating and following up QAP implementation, and providing support for staff who work on the QAP. Most QA stakeholders focus on spreading the culture of quality, auditing and archiving reports, and ensuring the maintenance of QA standards. On other hand, experts were involved in a variety of roles, such as the management and coordination of QAP, counselling and instructing staff through training programs.

7.3.2.3 Quality Assurance Operation

Initially, the answers of interviewees from the three groups drew a broad picture of the current reality of the QAP at the university, which can be summarised in the following points:

1. Processes of quality at the university have two sides: QA and the institutional and programme accreditations.
2. Deanship of Development and QA has been established and it launched a series of rules and regulations to manage QA operations.
3. Deanship of Development and QA has been established to support the university in preparing specific requirements to achieve QA standards. The experts in QA deanship offer support for any college seeking to achieve national or international accreditation.
4. Each college has an office of QA that was established in cooperation with the Deanship of Development and QA.
5. The university administration offers great support to enhance the operation of QAP.
6. QA stakeholders who have authority for evaluation continually visit the offices of QA to check that they are undertaking the process in suitable way. Moreover, they evaluate the performance of the office's coordinators, based on their achievement and evidence documentation.
7. The university encourages students to participate in QAP, such as the academic programs and teachers' annual evaluations. The results are used to identify the weaknesses of colleges; colleges will be asked to clarify reasons for low performance.

Some respondents pointed out that the work of QA began four years ago. A kind of frustration appeared in their responses because of a failure to achieve their goals. One of the QA staff said, *"We began the work of QA and accreditation four years ago and we have not completed it. We are just about to complete the primary self-study for institutional accreditation."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 3; Male). Another QA respondent commented,*"There has been hard work on QA projects at the university during the last three years... the pace of work has recently decreased... there is still talk about the QAP, but our work is just routine."* (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 2; Male).

Interestingly, the data showed that there are differences in the operation of QAP between old established colleges and newly established colleges in the university. In fact, the majority of interviewees believed that the newly established colleges have better practices than the older ones. They believed that it is easier for a new college to achieve QA standards and accreditation for one main reason. They pointed out that: *"At the time of establishment, the new colleges took into account the new education orientations, development and conceptions, such as QA issues. However, the old ones see the change as a big challenge."* (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 5; Male). Another respondent added: *"Because the new colleges were synchronised with the evolution of QA and accreditation, their system was established according to the standards of QA."* (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 2; Female).

Respondents indicated some aspects of reality of QAP in the new colleges, which can be seen as reasons for good practice. The most prominent practices mentioned in data can be summarised in the following points:

1. There are ongoing efforts and a clear plan to achieve the QA requirements. Some newly established colleges have already obtained international accreditation for the whole college, or for some of their academic programs.
2. These colleges have a low number of students and staff members, and that facilitates the management of QA operations.
3. In some new colleges, peer review is conducted at the end of each semester. All academic staff are asked to give a presentation to demonstrate what has been done to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their team, programmes and resources, and then receive feedback from the college management and QA staff, and also from their colleagues.
4. The process of QA is clear and moving smoothly, and most stakeholders know and understand their roles and responsibilities.
5. The university administration offers great support to these colleges. In addition, the deans of colleges have high enthusiasm for QA and continually monitor the QA offices in their college.

On the other hand, some management stakeholders in the old colleges discussed some of the factors behind the decline in the pace of work in the QAP. One management stakeholder believed:

"The old established colleges have a huge number of students and members, and this makes the workload heavier. It is also against the QA requirements to have such large cohorts." (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 6; Male).

A stakeholder of QA added:
"Despite the efforts of these colleges and the availability of some incentives, they still need more time to achieve the required standards. Some of the old colleges are close to attaining the QA standards and there are others who have not achieved anything yet." (Interview; Respondent: M8; Q. No: 2; Male).

Meanwhile, another one commented:
"There is insufficient support for these colleges from the senior management, especially compared to what the new colleges received." (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 3; Female).

In the following theme, and from the angle of stakeholders' engagement, the differences between newly established colleges and the older ones will be highlighted.

7.3.3 Stakeholders' Engagement in QA Operation

The majority of the three groups of interviewees were agreed that faculty members in a university should have a significant role in the success of QA operations. One member of management said, *"I think the QA requirements are a part of faculty members' duties and commitments."* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Q. No: 2; Male). A quality assurance stakeholder believed, *"Faculty members are the basis for success in the operation of QAP."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 4; Male). An internal QA expert stated, *"I believe that the faculty members have an important role in the practice and undertaking of some of the tasks of QA."* (Interview; Respondent: E6; Q. No: 2; Male).

In order to explore stakeholders' engagement in the case study institution, the participants' responses were analysed, and presented in the following categories.

7.3.3.1 General Views of Stakeholders' Engagement

In general, the majority of the three groups of respondents believed it was normal that in any institution some people would accept a new system of QA and others would refuse to participate in its operations. One of the management stakeholders stated a reason:

"Anywhere in the world you will find people who welcome QAP and those who are reluctant to participate in the new system... because they did not understand the importance of QA." (Interview; Respondent: M1; Q. No: 5; Male).

According to all interviewee groups, stakeholders' engagement in the case study university is varied and not all members were enthusiastic about participating in QA operations. However, the perspectives of interviewees also varied in estimating the extent of stakeholders' engagement. A management member stated, *"Although not all faculty members have the same enthusiasm to participate, the majority undertook QA requirements related to course specification and reports, as these tasks became mandatory."* (Interview; Respondent: M8; Q. No: 3; Male). Another management member agreed, adding, *"The university administration seeks to make faculty members familiar with and fully convinced about QAP."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 4; Male).

A key QA stakeholder in the university presented a general estimation of the stakeholders' engagement rate in the operation of QA, suggesting,
"There are those who refuse to participate in the QAPs, and others who desire to work hard for it, because they have awareness of the advantages of QA… but, honestly, they are very few. I can say that 20% of faculty members participate in QA committees and attend workshops about it, 30% agree that QAP is important, but they have no time to engage in the QAPs, while 50% are against QA." (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 5; Male).

One internal expert believed that a faculty member has many priorities before QAPs, and he made it clear that, *"Faculty members have many areas to participate in the academic field. Teaching is the first task that should be achieved at high quality. Additional work and requirements by senior management, such as QAPs, should be number two."* (Interview; Respondent: E6; Q. No: 3; Male).

Interestingly, while a number of respondents pointed out that there has been a decrease in stakeholders' engagement in QA operations, an external QA expert believed that, in general, stakeholders' engagement in Saudi universities is improving. He stated that, *"In the majority of Saudi universities, faculty members' participation in QAP is increasing continuously. This is not just in terms of attending workshops or committees meetings, but also in daily activities involving QAP."* (Interview; Respondent: E23; Q. No: 1; Male).

This could mean that the stakeholders' engagement in QA operations was worse and now there is some improvement.

7.3.3.2 Criteria and Guidance for Engagement

The majority of interviewees asserted that the availability of criteria and guidance for engagement is an important factor in ensuring a high level of stakeholders' engagement in QA operations. However, the views of respondents were inconsistent about the availability of any kind of engagement criteria.

A few of the interviewees believed there is clear guidance for participating in QA operations, and what faculty members have to do as a part of their academic work. Two management stakeholders suggested, *"Faculty members have to prepare course specifications at the start of semester, and a report at the end of it. Also, they have to apply what is written in the course specification."* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Q. No: 3; Male). *"I think what faculty members have to do as part of their academic work must be documented."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 5; Male).

However, the majority of respondents who discussed this issue believed there are no criteria or guidance for participation in QA operations, and there are two points of view on this issue. The first group believed that although there is no guidance for participation, the requirements are clear and well known. One of management interviewees stated that: *"There are no written standards for QA practices, but if a faculty member follows the instructions by QA office they will know what they have to do."* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 4; Male).

Another management stakeholder explained how stakeholders' engagement could be measured without existing engagement criteria: *"There are no guidelines or standards for participation… but we measure staff engagement, whether they do or do not accomplish QA requirements."* (Interview; Respondent: M13; Q. No: 2; Male).

The second group believed that the absence of criteria and guidance for engagement in QA can negatively affect the QA operations, and to avoid this there continues to be a demand for them. One of QA stakeholders indicated that this is common: *"There is a mismatch between faculty members in understanding how to achieve QA standards... everyone wants to apply these standards in their work and understanding... this sometimes causes conflicts*

in the work. I think that the reason for this problem is the lack of clear guidance for the implementation of tasks." (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 4; Male).

One manager was completely convinced that the existence of engagement standards would improve the level of engagement: *"If there are clear standards for participating in QA operations, faculty members will accept them and will work hard to achieve high levels of engagement."* (Interview; Respondent: M12; Q. No: 2; Male). In addition, one of experts confirmed: *"If there is a clear and accurate guide of QAP, which suits our work circumstances, and with sufficient incentives, I think all that will reflect positively on QA operations."* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 2; Female).

7.3.3.3 Nominating QA Staff

Quality assurance staff play significant roles in the university in directing the operation of QA, following up requirements, and auditing the reports and documentation. The data indicated that nominated QA staff fulfilled the criteria required.

A number of respondents pointed out that there are no clear criteria for selecting people to work in QA offices and committees. Nevertheless, it is clear that the majority of QA staff are selected for their own reasonable knowledge and experience of QA and accreditation, and because they attended training programmes. One of management stakeholders asserted that, *"QA staff are nominated because they have experience and attended internal or external training."* (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 7; Male).

Another management stakeholder stated, *"The University nominated experienced faculty members to work in QA offices… most of those members have attended training and workshops about QA issues."* (Interview; Respondent: M8; Q. No: 4; Male).

One of the key QA stakeholders indicated an interesting reason to nominate faculty members; he believed that a desire to achieve high standards in the QA field is a key element in nominating QA staff. *"We search for those who have a desire to work in this area because the work of QAP needs additional time and effort, and then we look at their qualifications."* (Interview; Respondent: QA19; Q. No: 3; Male).

Based on the above, although it appears that there are unpublished criteria for the nomination of academics to work in the QA offices, the knowledge, experience, attendance

of training and workshops on QA, in addition to the desire to work in that area, are all factors that might be considered when nominating individuals to be QA staff.

7.3.3.4 Stakeholders' Engagement in Old and Newly Established Colleges

As mentioned previously, the data showed that there are differences between old and newly established colleges in the reality of QA operation, for many reasons. Here, according to management and QA stakeholders in both types of colleges, it is supposed that the nature of work requirements in the colleges, the available support from senior management, qualified individuals and finance, the extent of understanding QAP and the clarity of QAP mechanisms all might make a difference in stakeholders' engagement.

The following table (7.3) provides a detailed comparison of stakeholders' engagement in the majority of old and newly established colleges.

Table 7. 3 Engagement in old and newly established colleges

Old Established College	*Newly Established College*
• The college members' participation is acceptable and sometimes weak because the meaning of quality is not clear and the culture of QA not widespread. • There are members who do not like this work, and they think it is additional work and not a part of their job commitments. • Academic members have a heavy workload and do not have time for QAPs • Some colleges are huge and have high numbers of students and programs; therefore, it could be difficult for faculty members to apply QAP. • Some management members try to complete QAPs, however, they will do it in rush and could make many mistakes because they have large work commitments with: (1) academic departments, (2) the senior management, (3) meetings, and (4) teaching load. • QA offices have insufficient finances and human resources to encourage stakeholders' engagement in the college. • A key member of QA office stated, *"We have no evaluation system, nor valuable activities involving QA, nor organised documentation, nor information or statistics systems to measure our achievement, or what information is missed."* (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 4; Female)	• The majority of faculty members believe in the importance of QA, know the details of the process and complete the requirements because they see the advantages of QAP. • Faculty members have a clear plan and deadlines for each task of QAP. • Faculty members engage in QAP to a great extent. A management member of a new college stated, *"I can say that 95% of members in the college participate in QAP willingly, and 5% participate, but with more reluctance, and this because they are new in the college environment, so they need more time."* (Interview; Respondent: M9; Q. No: 2; Male) • The academic load is manageable in terms of QA standards and gives members sufficient time to meet QA requirements. • Some members cannot engage effectively because they carry a heavy academic load. College management supports them and encourages cooperation between college members to accomplish QA work, or decreases the academic load, if possible. • The college management encourages everyone to have a role in QAP. • The QA office provides faculty members with feedback to improve their work.

7.3.4 Staff Development

The data shows that there is an urgent need for workshops and training programs to spread the culture of QA and to train faculty members to raise the level of their participation in the operation of QAP. To explore this in depth, the respondents' responses were analysed, and presented in the following categories.

7.3.4.1 Importance of Staff Development

The majority of management stakeholders believed training and workshops were very important for faculty members, and that everyone should attend workshops and training every year. One highlighted this thus, *"Workshops and training are important in the development of faculty members to be as experts in QAP, this can make them a reference point within their colleges in their role of supporting colleagues."* (Interview; Respondent: M8; Q. No: 5; Male).

The QA stakeholders agreed with the importance of staff development in regard to QA issues, and one of them added, *"Workshops, training and lectures are effective ways to spread QA concepts."* (Interview; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 3; Female). Another asserted that, *"QAP cannot be understood by attending one or two workshops. Quality is linked to many aspects of the academic field. Faculty members should attend many workshops in many areas."* (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 4; Male).

Most quality experts who were interviewed emphasised the importance of providing training opportunities for all faculty members, and one of them commented, *"Staff development in QA is always needed and must continue with no limit."* (Interview; Respondent: E6; Q. No: 4; Male).

7.3.4.2 Availability of Staff Development Programmes

Regarding the availability of training programmes and workshops in the field of QA, respondents from all three groups of stakeholders raised the following points:

- The Deanship of Development and QA offers internal training programs and workshops year-round in the field of QA and accreditation.
- The university has continuous cooperation with NCAAA to offer training programs and workshops for faculty members year-round in the field of QA and

accreditation. These training programs and workshops can be conducted inside KSA and outside in various countries, such as the UK and the USA.

- The Deanship of Development and QA encourage faculty members who have a desire to work at QA offices to attend training and workshops about QA.
- The Deanship of Development and QA provide more training opportunities for people who have the ability and the desire to transfer knowledge to their colleagues after attending training programs.
- Few colleges consider the training needs of faculty members and encourage them to attend training programs and workshops, inside and outside the university.
- Attending workshops and training programs is not mandatory.
- The training and workshops are conducted in Arabic and English.

A large number of interviewees from the three groups asserted that the available programs do not meet the needs of the faculty members and not all staff members have equal access to adequate opportunities. One respondent said, *"Training programs are insufficient. We need more to make sure all faculty members have the same opportunity for training and understanding the QAPs."* (Interview; Respondent: M3; Q. No: 8; Male). Another respondent added, *"The training opportunities are usually available for those who work in QA offices, units, and committees."* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 3; Female).

Some participants indicated that the QA training programs available tend to focus on QA concepts more than how to implement QA requirements. Moreover, a QA expert criticised the quality of some of the training programs related to QA, describing them as more like meetings for the distribution of tasks, rather than workshops. She said, *"Really they are meetings more than workshops. The trainer comes and distributes some forms to people, lets them know their responsibilities, asks them to back to their colleges or department and fill in the forms… there is no in-depth training!"* (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 5; Female).

However, a few respondents indicated that there were some workshops which explained course specifications, NCAAA QA standards, learning standards, documentation, and assessment methods and processes.

7.3.5 Engagement challenges

In order to explore whether there are issues confronting the development of effective QAP, participants were asked whether they were aware of any difficulties or challenges that reduced the level of engagement in QA operations. A number of critical issues emerged, relating to stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QA. These challenges were raised and reiterated by the participants in their responses, in relation to management challenges, stakeholders' challenges, the process of QA, staff development and incentives. The responses were analysed, and presented in the following sub-themes.

7.3.5.1 Management Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Respondents raised a number of management issues that they believed affected and continue to affect the nature of stakeholders' engagement since the start of QA at the university. The majority of interviewees from all three groups believed the university management is responsible for not achieving acceptable achievements in the operation of QA, for a number of reasons. First, the concept of QA and how to manage the process is not clear in the minds of influential senior management and decision makers. An expert in QA said, *"It has been four years since we adopted QA, but we have had no acceptable achievements. This is a result of the lack of a major foundation for the concept of QA."* In addition, she commented, *"The concept of QA is muddled, unclear in decision makers' minds and thus the members in a practical field; this leads to confusion in the operation of QAP."* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 4; Female).

Secondly, there is no clear consensus between the university management and stakeholders on the concepts of QA operation and the work requirements. This is probably due to several factors arising from the data. For instance, in relation to the approach of launching the QA project, a respondent from the QA group emphasised that, *"Since the beginning of the QA project there was a pressure from the senior management to apply QAPs in order to get accreditation. Their approach to the change was aggressive… It was imposing rather than spreading the concept of QA."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 6; Male). Another QA stakeholder commented, *"The University has started the application directly and before spreading the conception of QA and its standards. This issue set a conflict, not only among faculty members, but also among decision makers."* (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 3; Male). This approach to the introduction of QA did not just create a conflict between stakeholders, it also created resistance in the managerial levels. A quality

assurance stakeholder pointed out that, *"There was a resistance from some deans to QAP. They cannot stop the process, but they do not encourage their team to work, therefore, the work will not be done in the right way."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 7; Male).

The third issue concerns the composition of directors and staff of the deanships, offices, and committees responsible for QA operations, and the distribution of authorities and responsibilities. Although the respondents emphasised the importance of having an active team in QA operation, they asserted that repeated changes to personnel among the directors and team before achieving some of the goals lead to instability in the workflow. An expert of QA suggested that, *"Repeatedly reforming the QA team causes disruption and wasted time because each new team will start from the beginning."* (Interview; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 1; Female). A management stakeholder suggested: *"International QA bodies recommended that an individual responsible for quality should work in their position for a long period, until they have achieved their main goals, and train someone else to take on their responsibilities when they leave."* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 5; Male).

On the other hand, some respondents believed the distribution of authority and responsibilities is one of the main challenges that face stakeholders' engagement in the QA operations. A QA expert stated, *"There are many problems in trusting and distributing roles and responsibilities between university staff because there are no clear principles or standards."* (Interview; Respondent: E6; Q. No: 5; Male). A manager of QA office commented that, *"QA office managers have limited authority to make decisions about QAP and, for example, apply creative ways to spread quality culture and the application of processes."* (Interview; Respondent: E18; Q. No: 1; Female).

The last critical issue highlighted by the interviews in terms of management challenges is the communication between the managerial levels and stakeholders. Some respondents emphasised bureaucracy as the approach adopted by the university management and this has a negative impact on communication between the managerial levels and staff, causing a delay in task completion. A QA stakeholder provided an example of how communication was conducted between the Deanship of Development and a faculty member, *"The Deanship of Development and QA deanship cannot contact faculty members directly. They have to contact the college's dean first, then they will contact their deputy of QA, then the deputy will contact the department director, then the director will contact the faculty, and*

then the response returns in the same way!" (Interview; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 4; Female).

Therefore, stakeholders believe that the difficulty of communicating with management levels responsible for the operation of QA makes it difficult for a faculty member to get direct support when facing any challenge in achieving QA requirements. A management interviewee stated, *"The managers responsible for QA operation ask us to complete the requirements; however, they do not explain how to do them in a good way. We do not know how to get information about QA goals... or advantages. There is a lack of understanding of the benefits of participation in QAP."* (Interview; Respondent: M12; Q. No: 3; Male).
To solve these problems and other management challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

Suggestions and solutions provided by management stakeholder:

- The senior management must provide the Deanship of Development and QA with more authority to follow up the stakeholders' participation, and more financial incentives to encourage them with.
- The University should enact a law linking the achievement of QA requirements with career upgrades.
- Adopting a well-defined framework that makes the concept of QA clear so everyone can understand it.
- In the worst conditions, the senior management needs to promulgate laws to oblige faculty members to carry out QA work.

Suggestions and solutions provided by QA stakeholder:

- To increase the level of participation in QAP there is an urgent need for a clear planning and engagement guidelines.
- QAPs must be monitored accurately and deadlines set to achieve each standard of QA.
- Communication between senior management and all sectors in the university must be more effective in order to tackle any issues emerging through the operation of QA.

Suggestions and solutions provided by internal and external experts:

- Making QA requirements a part of the faculty members' academic loads will ensure that they are carried out.

- The senior management should adopt a friendly approach that helps convince staff that QA is a positive idea, by asserting, for example, QA benefits, and that QA is not intended to identify mistakes, but to make improvements. This approach would help to increase the awareness of the importance of QA.
- To increase stakeholders' engagement, the university management should improve the mechanisms of QAP, make the QAPs electronic, and clearly define the roles of students and faculty in these processes.

7.3.5.2 Stakeholders' Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Data showed that the understanding and awareness of the stakeholders of QA concepts, their own qualifications and skills to participate in the operation of the QAP and their views toward QAP, all affected the extent of participation of stakeholders in the operation of QA.

The first issue is the extent of stakeholders' awareness and understanding of QA concept and their roles in accomplishing the procedures. An expert of QA highlighted that *"Staff have a general concept about QA."* (Interview; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 2; Female). Another expert expanded on this explanation, and he claimed that, *"There is a lack of awareness of QA among university staff, from the highest level to the lowest level of administrative hierarchy. If we overcome this challenge and everyone understands the importance of QA then there should be no more problems."* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No, 5; Female).

A key stakeholder of QA was concerned that the reason for the lack of clarity of the concept of QA in the minds of stakeholders was the approach that was adopted in introducing and applying QA at the university. He explained, *"The concept of QA was brought in with the desire to obtain accreditation, which created greater focus on the accreditation. Linking QA with accreditation gave the wrong message: QA is a temporary project. The university spent a lot of money and some members did work hard, however, the accreditation has not been achieved yet. So, the university staff feels frustrated about both the project of institutional accreditation and QA."* (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 4; Male).

Whether this is behind the lack of clarity about the concept of QA for stakeholders, or there are other challenges present, the data showed that the misunderstanding of QA represents a significant challenge for stakeholders to understand their roles and participate

effectively in the operations. This was confirmed by one of the experts, *"The vagueness of roles is behind the delay to achieve QA goals."* (Interview; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 3; Female). This issue led one management stakeholder to raise the following enquiry: *"I think we need to ask, does the university offer suitable training and conduct sufficient discussions for staff about these issues? I think not."* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Q. No: 4; Male).

The second challenge noted was the lack of qualified staff to work on QAP – in this case, the stakeholders were doing QAPs based on their perspectives. One QA group member stated, *"We are not professionals and sometimes we do not know how to accomplish these tasks... we work as hard as we can, based on our specialties."* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 5; Male). The challenge becomes serious when the university lost some qualified staff. A management stakeholder commented that, *"Some professional faculties are non-Saudi. The university pays a lot of money to train them, but we lose them for many reasons, such as family circumstances, or moving to another university for more salary, and so on."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 6; Male).

Another challenge that arose from the data was the resistance of some stakeholders. The data showed that there are many reasons for this resistance. For instance, one QA stakeholder said, *"Some older faculty are not convinced of the QA concept."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 7; Male). In addition, some of the older faculty members face difficulties in participation. A QA stakeholder stated, *"They think this is hard work, and they have to learn new skills and understand new information, so they see it as a challenge."* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 8; Male). Another reason is that there are those who believe there is no need to change the work process. A management stakeholder remarked, *"Some individuals do not practice QAPs at all, for many reasons: they have no experience about these issues, or no willingness to changing their traditional way of working."* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Q. No: 5; Male).

Some stakeholders avoid participation, as they believe that the QA system is not fit for purpose because it was not developed by the university. One of the QA staff pointed out that, *"Some members believe the QA system was imposed from outside the university and this has a negative impact on the culture of the organisation."* (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 5; Male).

The last reasons for resistance emerging from the data was that some people believe QA tasks are additional work, not a part of their academic duties, and they view it as a threat to their privacy. A director of the QA office explained the situation,
"Some people look at QAP as a way to ensure the work is moving perfectly, others believe QAP is a way to storm the privacy of faculty members. They believe no one should be allowed to check their work, such as asking them to show the students' results, or using a method of assessment. The third team of faculty members believe that QAPs requires a lot of work, which needs a long time to be completed. Some of those people do the work quickly, with many mistakes." (Interview; Respondent: QA19; Q. No: 5; Male).

The last stakeholder challenge to emerge, which was reiterated by most interviewees, is the workload. Some respondents confirmed that faculty members were too busy to do effective QA because they have many commitments. This reduces the level of staff participation in QA operations. The impact of workload varies depending on the faculty members' positions and commitments. From the management level, an interviewee said, *"Some faculty members have administrative positions and huge workloads, so they are very busy and cannot participate."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 8; Male).

A manager of the QA committee explained his situation, *"It is difficult to do QAP requirements when you have a lot of managerial tasks. Maybe some administrators do QAP requirements, but they will do it quickly and will make many errors. The department asks us to do work... the senior management ask us to do more work and attend many meetings... and we have our academic load on top of this... it is difficult to manage all that."* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 6; Male).

General faculty members also complain about the burden of workload. A stakeholder of QA said, *"The time of faculty members is divided between many roles: academic workload, committees, councils, research… in this case, faculty members cannot achieve quality standards."* (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 6; Male). A management stakeholder confirmed, *"High academic workload, managerial tasks and urgent work are disrupting faculty members' daily plans and cause a delay in the QA work."* (Interview; Respondent: M9; Q. No: 3; Male).

To tackle the above problems and other stakeholders' challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

Suggestions and solutions proposed by management stakeholder:

- It is very important to increase the awareness of the QA concept among faculty members and assert that the QAP have to be a part of the education process.
- The work has to continue even if there is a resistance to it; the culture of QA will spread and resistance will decrease.
- There must be a qualified team in the Deanship of Development and QA who can provide adequate support when any college faces any problem in understanding or practicing QAP.
- Setting clear standards for engagement in QAP will make members accept it and work hard to achieve a high level of performance.
- Stakeholders always complain about the large number of forms and following up in the process… if the processes were converted to an e-system, that would facilitate the work very much.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by QA stakeholder:

- Promote the culture of QA among teachers and students.
- Decrease the academic workload to give the faculty sufficient time for doing QA tasks.
- The university should choose experienced faculty to work on this issue and give them low or no academic workload.
- The university management should increase the awareness, meaning and importance of quality in all staff, and encourage them to see QAP as a part of their work duties.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by internal and external experts:

- Make QA work a part of the annual assessment of faculty members' performance. This idea must be applied in an accurate way and with high transparency.
- Convincing people in positive way will make them engage in QAP. This can be done by explaining the advantage of QA to their career progression and for the university.
- Increase staff loyalty to the university and develop their teamwork skills.

7.3.5.3 QAP Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

The data indicated that QAP proceeds slowly in some sectors of the university and is semi-stalled in others. Respondents indicated that there are a number of challenges facing the stakeholders during the implementation of tasks.

Some respondents believed that the management culture in the institution is still traditional and this affects the operation of QAP. An expert of QA explained, *"The process is moving slowly toward the application of QA standards. The reason is we are still dealing with work in a traditional style."* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 6; Female). A management stakeholder added, *"It is difficult to achieve QA standards in the prevailing academic culture... the number of students and the proportion of students to academic staff is one of the dilemmas."* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 6; Male).

With regards to quality and operation requirements, most respondents stressed the lack of clarity and lack of operational manuals to explain the mechanisms of work, both at the level of committees and offices, or at the individual level. This led to a number of problems in the implementation of procedures, which were noted by a number of respondents. In criticising the case, a stakeholder of QA stated,
"There is no clear vision about the role of the QA office at colleges. There is no information about the roles of QA members, or how to distribute tasks and responsibilities. There is no job description. In fact, some roles have big titles, but we do not know precisely what their requirements are." (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 6; Female).

In relation to the lack of clear guidance for the QAPs, a stakeholder of QA highlighted that the QA operations is going according to individual interpretations, and he added, *"There is no clear way of doing the QAPs, so everyone does them in their own way. This causes disruption and mistakes."* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 7; Male). This perspective was confirmed by a management stakeholder, who highlighted the results of this issue, *"There is a misunderstanding of the way to fill in these forms; therefore, everyone does it in different way. So, all members do it, but it is not accurate and, of course, that affects the results of work."* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 7; Male).

The language of the QA forms and applications is another challenge facing stakeholders' engagement in QA operations. The forms are in English and the majority of faculty

members do not speak English. One QA stakeholder criticised that, *"The Deanship of Development and QA ask us to do QA forms in English and this is difficult for the majority of faculty members in none Science Colleges because their language is Arabic. Some departments have solved this problem and others asked for help from the Deanship to offer a translator… but support never came."* (Interview; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 7; Female).

To tackle these problems and other QA operation challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

Suggestions and solutions proposed by management stakeholder:

- It is important to change and improve the QAP in a professional manner and not randomly. In addition, system stability is very important, so stakeholders do not get bored of the many changes, decreasing their participation.
- Take advantage of the experiences of other universities in the development of QA operation.
- Offering a clear and accurate guide of QAP will be helpful for all staff members, new or old. It will limit mistakes, making the results more accurate.

Suggestions and solutions provided by QA stakeholder:

- Apply an e-management system to follow up the work process.
- Link colleges together to share their experiences and information about QA operation.
- Increasing faculty members' awareness and understanding of new teaching methods, designing course goals and how to predict the outputs of the course will reduce mistakes in QA documents and will help the QA office to evaluate the forms quickly.

7.3.5.4 Staff Development Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Respondents emphasised the important role of training programs and workshops in enhancing the participation of stakeholders in the QA operations. However, there are a number of challenges that limit the benefits of those programs. For example, a number of respondents pointed to the lack of programs offered by the university about QAP, and one of the management stakeholders commented: *"It has been a year… I did not receive any invitation to attend training or workshops about QA. Therefore, I think the culture of QA was not spread in suitable way. Maybe the support from management was not sufficient."* (Interview; Respondent: M12; Q. No: 4; Male).

Despite inadequate training programs, as claimed by some respondents, the data showed that the available training programs and workshops were attended by only a small number of faculty members. This was confirmed by one of the experts, *"I work as trainer of QAP, I have noted that the attendance of workshops was weak."* (Interview; Respondent: E18; Q. No: 2; Female). A management stakeholder believed that the reason for this may be a lack of stakeholder conviction over the QA project and the impact of change in the work system, and he commented, *"Members do not have a good awareness of the importance of QA, nor its expected results, so they did not accept QAP and they did not attend workshops about it."* (Interview; Respondent: M12; Q. No: 5; Male).

In addition, the respondents outlined some points that they believed were drawbacks of the available training programs and workshops for QAP:

- The majority of available training programs target mainly members of QA committees, units, and offices.
- Some important training programs are only available in English; however, the majority of faculty members cannot attend them because they speak only Arabic.
- The university offers some training programs, but they are not good enough to explain the concept and principles of QA, and its processes.
- There are no assessments for the training programs to measure to what extent faculty benefit from training, or how it impacts on their work.
- Some staff members at managerial levels are unable to attend many training programs and workshops because they have a heavy workload of managerial tasks and programme times are not suitable.

To address the above problems and other staff development challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

Suggestions and solutions proposed by management stakeholder:

- Faculty members need encouragement to attend training and workshops. For example, adopt Excellence Awards to encourage faculty to develop themselves. One of the award requirements could be attending training courses provided by the Deanship of Development and QA, either internally or externally.
- Offer sufficient training and workshops to make sure all faculty members receive training and understand the QAPs.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by QA stakeholder:

- Encourage faculty members who have a good training program to conduct it within the university, and provide them with needed support
- It is important to have someone in each department to check the training needs of faculty members, then advise them to attend helpful training.
- There are stakeholders in both high and low levels of practising QAP. The university should provide a clear training program, where each member can know what is required of them and what the training is, along with workshops that must be attended for the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by internal and external experts:

- Some training programs must be compulsory because they are important to resolve some problems of employee performance.
- Offering professional training programs and workshops that suit all faculty members' work positions, needs and time.

7.3.5.5 Incentives Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Respondents agreed that incentives, especially financial incentives, play a prominent role to encourage employees to put more effort into QA, and they believe that if there is nothing to encourage staff, they cannot go forward. However, the critical issue facing both the university management and stakeholders is that the majority of stakeholders believe participation in QA operations is additional work and everyone working on this project should obtain sufficient incentives. An expert of QA commented, *"No one likes to do additional work without incentives, especially when members have high teaching workloads."* (Interview; Respondent: E18; Q. No: 3; Female).

Respondents confirmed the existence of financial incentives since the launch of the QA project, but they strongly criticised the incentive system and method of delivery, as well as the type of people eligible for the incentives. A stakeholder of QA highlighted several aspects:

"There are no incentives for faculty members to work on QAP at the department level, but there are for those who work in the higher managerial levels, and for those working with committees at a university level. Therefore, normal faculty members get nothing. Moreover, the incentives are low, vary from one sector to another and it takes a long time

to be paid. This made everyone feel frustrated." (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Q. No: 7; Male).

An expert of QA said, *"I remember that four years ago there were low incentives. Nonetheless, a high percentage of faculty members did the requirements of QA. However, not all people got their money, and now even the low incentives have stopped."* (Interview; Respondent: E18; Q. No: 4; Male).

More responses confirmed that the controversy in this case has shaken the trust between stakeholders and the university management; this led to the reluctance of many people to work in QA operations.

To tackle the above problems and other incentives challenges, the QA stakeholder proposed the following measures:

- Develop an equitable and clear system of incentives relating to the tasks of QA operation.
- The university management should provide stakeholders with incentives, based on their performance and completed tasks, and not based on their work positions.
- Incentives cannot be just monetary. They could also include reducing the academic load for those who work in QA operations.

7.3.6 The Importance of E-Management and its Potential Use in the QA Operation

To explore stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management in the operation of QAP, participants were asked several questions (see appendix 2. A, B). The participants' responses were analysed, and presented in the following sub-themes.

7.3.6.1 Availability of E-Services to support QA Operation

Respondents from all three groups of stakeholders raised the following points about the availability of e-services in the university.

First, the respondents pointed out that the university currently has the following facilities that apply many e-management applications:

- Deanship of IT. The Deanship has achieved a high level of readiness to shift traditional work to e-services in the university.
- Deanship of Admission and Registration.
- The Centre of Documents and Administrative Communication.
- Statistics and Data Management.

- The university has a large and advanced technology infrastructure. The evidence is the distance-learning system that manages about 140,000 students' learning online.

Secondly, some respondents criticised the current reality of the use of technology at the university, and raised the following points:

- Despite the significant services provided by The Centre of Documents and Administrative Communication in the management of transactions and documentation, the Deanship of Development and QA does not take advantage of them yet.
- The university has many applications for e-management; however, there is an urgent need for more of these applications, especially in management: routine managerial tasks, transactions, communication between the departments and faculties of the university, and communication with faculty, students, staff members, and even with the parents of the students, when needed.

Regarding the existence of a relationship between the operation of QA and e-management, and the availability of e-services to support QA operations in the university, respondents from all three groups of stakeholders raised the following points:

- The only e-services used for QAP is the e-assessment of programs and faculty staff. It has built-in collaboration with the IT Deanship. The respondents believe this is a great service, as it is fast and accurate.
- The Deanship of IT is working to build a system to make the university paper-free, and this could support the QAP.
- The Centre of Documents and Administrative Communication has launched a Content Management System called (SHAREK) for helping the university to speed up transactions. However, one of the key management staff commented that *"QAPs could benefit from this system, but we do not know how yet."* (Interview; Respondent: M21; Q. No: 9; Male).
- With limited qualified programmers and financial resources, a few newly established colleges have tried to launch simple systems to manage some of their QAPs. Some of their initiatives were discussed by some respondents:
    1. Checklist system. This is an internal system in a college. The system focuses on set QA tasks that faculty members have to do in each semester. The system automatically sends a report to the dean of the college about the achievements

of departments and faculty members, and the reasons why some members' tasks were not done.

2. Quality server. This is a sharing server used for limited services of QAP. All administrative and academic departments of the college upload all QA and accreditation data, decisions, assessment reports, results and reports on it.
3. E-documentation system. This is designed for documentation, sharing files and data, and following up some QAP. The system is still in probation and needs more development and improvement.

On the other hand, a large number of respondents pointed out that the e-services at the university were good, to a large extent; however, they are not adaptable, and their advantages have not been taken up in supporting QAP due to the lack of cooperation between the Deanship of Development and QA and those sectors who provide or use e-services. For example, one expert highlighted that, *"Statistics and Data Management, which was established to support QA operations, provides limited data, which is not up-to-date... The Deanship of Admission and Registration, and the Deanship of IT, too… all those sectors were supposed to have a big role in the QA operations, but unfortunately this is not clear."* (Interview; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 4; Female). In addition, the interviewees raised the following examples of cooperation between the university sectors regarding QA:

- There are centres of information and communication at the university, but they have weak roles in supporting the QAP.
- There is no system for managing QAP, or a center for managing QA data.

7.3.6.2 E-Management Concept

The respondents' understanding of e-management is varied. A few respondents had no idea and could not give any explanation of it, and there were those who had a general knowledge of some e-management applications.

A stakeholder of QA explained e-management as, *"Converting the managerial tasks from a manual process to an electronical process."* (Interview; respondent: QA15; Q. No: 8; Male). An expert of QA added, *"It means harnessing the technological revolution in facilitating management procedures electronically instead of using the traditional method."* (Interview; respondent: E6; Q. No: 6; Male).

The majority of interviewees stressed the importance of e-management in managing the university, especially in managing QA operation. A key management stakeholder encouraged the use of e-management, and he thought, *"The transformation to e-management is the most important step that we must take in the university management."* (Interview; respondent: M5; Q. No: 6; Male). Another management stakeholder added that, *"The technology is now an essential component of QA management and it is not a luxury."* (Interview; respondent: M3; Q. No: 9; Male).

In addition, one QA stakeholder indicated that the use of e-management applications is urgent and the university should not be delayed in obtaining its advantages. He remarked that *"E-management is an international trend and I think the university is delayed in reaping its benefits, compared to other universities."* (Interview; respondent: QA19; Q. No: 6; Male).

7.3.6.3 Potential E-Management Services for QA Operation

The majority of respondents showed great faith in the potential importance of e-management support to enhance the QA operations, and they believed it became an indicator of an institutions' development. An expert of QA stated that, *"Technology provides wide opportunities for development within an organisation and it has become one of most important orientations in educational administration."* (Interview; respondent: E17; Q. No: 5; Female). Regarding the proper type of e-management applications for QA operations, a management stakeholder commented, *"Any system that can achieve harmonious integration between QAP and technology would help achieve big success in the field of QA."* (Interview; respondent: M11; Q. No: 8; Male).

The stakeholders believed that e-management may offer solutions for many obstacles encountered in the QA operations. A stakeholder of QA asserted that, *"I am sure that many problems in the QAP may be resolved through the use of e-management."* (Interview; respondent: QA14; Q. No: 8; Male). In relation to this, an expert of QA stated, *"I think e-management is a very important solution. We are supposed to stress the use of e-management in the management of QAP to get rid of distractions and delays in information, where we are stuck now."* (Interview; respondent: E17; Q. No: 6; Female).

In addition, stakeholders indicated the importance of the role that e-management could play in controlling the QA operations and accelerating and maintaining achievement. A

key management stakeholder highlighted that, *"With e-management, no one has a chance to postpone tasks. It reduces the percentage ratio of errors, accelerates performance, increases achievement and all of these lead to maintaining QA."* (Interview; respondent: M13; Q. No: 3; Male).

The three groups agreed that e-management can provide countless services. The following table (7.4) presents a summary of the three interviewees groups' perceptions and expectations of the potential of e-management services to the QA operations.

Management Stakeholder	Quality Assurance Stakeholder	Internal & External Experts
• E-management would provide a very strong leap in the management of the QAP • It helps to control the work, getting statistics and indicators easily, and checking completed transactions • It can facilitate, link and transform data easily • Staff currently complain about the large number of papers, filling them in and following up the completion process. If the processes were converted to an e-system, that would facilitate the work and the achievement of QA goals • It is active, accurate and fast, accelerating the circulation of the data • To improve performance, facilitate the work, follow up and save paper • Automating the processes that are currently implemented manually • It has an accurate ability to monitor, follow up the work and a high level of transparency, so any mistake will be identified quickly.	• It will make the processes work more smoothly • It will facilitate evaluation and improve the processes • E-management is convenient for documentation, reporting and helping to reduce the consumption of paper and ink • It will greatly help to get accurate statistics quickly • It facilitates access to and regulate the flow of information, documentation and operation • Data will be managed efficiently • It helps QAP in many ways, such as work distribution, sending information and reports, communication, exchanging knowledge and information, and getting quick feedback • Effective in reducing the cost of work and improving QAP • It is more compatible with the new, modern work style	• It will offer easy access to information required by the decision maker • It will reduce the pressure on the management structure, reduce dispersion, and organise the work division process • It provides high transparency and the ability to control processes, which is important in administration • It is a good solution to the investment of time and effort, documenting information accurately and safely, and reduces the consumption of paper • It is a major supporter of QAP • It will help to understand what happens, accurately and up-to-date • Management Information Systems are very important to support several aspects of the educational field

Table 7. 4 The potential of e-management services to the QA operation

7.3.7 Potential Challenges and Solutions of applying E-Management in the QA Operation

The participants indicated a number of expected challenges when using e-management applications in the operation of QA; these challenges can be classified into challenges of management, stakeholders' challenges and technical challenges. In addition, they provided some solutions and suggestions to make the most of e-management in QA operations.

7.3.7.1 Management Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

A number of respondents believed that the biggest challenge facing the use of e-management applications in QA is the lack of conviction among senior management members. A management stakeholder stated, *"If the senior management adopts this project, it will be done quickly and without resistance from staff, but problems arise when resistance comes from some decision markers."* (Interview; respondent: M13; Q. No: 4; Male). An external QA expert added, *"The challenge is convincing some leaders in some universities to use the e-system, who don't even support the QA project. Leaders have the authority to make decisions with financial support, so, if they agree they will give that support."* (Interview; respondent: E23; Q. No: 2; Male).

Some respondents indicated that e-management made work more flexible in granting powers and accomplishing tasks, but that it may collide with the bureaucratic system followed in the university and those in a position of authority may see e-management as a threat. One QA member indicated, *"The administrative hierarchy has limited powers and is stuck in a strong bureaucracy."* (Interview; respondent: QA7; Q. No: 8; Female). An expert of QA confirmed that bureaucracy hinders the smooth exchange of data between sectors of the university, and as e-management mainly depends on data movement, bureaucracy would hinder the usage of e-applications in the effective operation of QA. This expert gave the following example:

"We have a problem in obtaining information… for example, I asked some departments to provide me with normal information about my students... and I could not obtain what I needed because of bureaucracy and the limited powers that I have. To get what I needed, I had to write many letters and wait a long time to get a reply." (Interview; respondent: E17; Q. No: 7; Female).

Moreover, a number of respondents from the three groups agreed that the current management structure does not obviously show support for cooperation, integration, communication or the effective exchange of information between university sectors, and this contradicts the principles of e-management. Respondents have listed a number of examples, including this one, given by a QA stakeholder,

"We have the Documentation Centre, the Deanship of IT and the Statistics Department, but the relationship between them and the QA committees is not consistent, and the services provided to QAP are weak and not helpful... It does not work properly." (Interview; respondent: QA14; Q. No: 9; Male).

Another challenge highlighted in the data was the language used in the e-management system: Arabic or English. The interviewees claimed that there is already a problem in QA operation because the forms and requirements are in English and the majority of the information in the university is in Arabic. A management stakeholder stated,

"Even when we translate the information, sometimes it becomes difficult to find accurate words or expressions. We need professional translation and the information has to be up-to-date." (Interview; respondent: QA4; Q. No: 2; Male).

To solve these problems and other management challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

- When the university management launch an e-management system for the operation of QA, it should be optional for some time, in order to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the new way of working. Then a strong decision from the university president is required to convert QAP and all managerial tasks from manual to the e-system.
- Adequate financial support for the training of internal experts and the attraction of external electronic QA experts must be provided.
- Integration and open communication between the Deanship of Development and QA and other sectors of the university must be promoted in order to exchange information, e-services and experience.
- Members of senior management and influential decision makers should be convinced of the potential benefits of e-management, to make them adopt and support the application.
- The institution should launch a system that supports both Arabic and English, providing experts in professional translation.

7.3.7.2 Stakeholders' Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Respondents raised a number of expected challenges related to the participation and interaction of stakeholders in any new QA e-system. Firstly, the lack of availability of the management team in the university, with their many burdens of work, which means they are unable to do more tasks. A management respondent stated, *"Faculty members are too busy and we have a lack of administrative staff."* (Interview; respondent: M3; Q. No: 10; Male).

Another challenge is the urgent need for well-qualified staff, for two reasons. As one internal expert stated, *"The majority of faculty members cannot use the e-system in professional way. Therefore, they need good training programs."* (Interview; respondent: E18; Q. No: 5; Female). A manager added, *"Many faculty members and general staff cannot use the new e-system, especially older staff."* (Interview; respondent: M12; Q. No: 6; Male). The second reason relates to the design and establishment of the new e-system, as pinpointed by a management respondent, *"We don't have qualified staff with the ability to identify the needs and features of the e-system."* (Interview; respondent: M5; Q. No: 7; Male). With regards to this, a key QA stakeholder stressed the need to focus on native staff in training programs for the new e-system; he said *"It is very important that staff are recruited from citizens to ensure they will stay in their job for a long time. Non-citizens tend to consume training resources, work for a short time and then leave the institution."* (Interview; respondent: QA15; Q. No: 9; Male).

Respondents also frequently discussed the possibility of resistance at all levels of the institution in the use of e-management in the operation of QA. The data indicated several reasons behind the resistance of some individuals, such as a lack of belief in the QA system, or lack of interest in the use of technology in doing their work at all. In addition, respondents added other interesting reasons: the first one was raised by a management stakeholder, relating to some individuals' anxiety towards the ability of e-management systems to monitor the work and detect faults. He stated, *"E-management applications have great accuracy in monitoring, following up the work and a high level of transparency… any mistake will be identified quickly, so some members see the e-system as a threat."* (Interview; respondent: M5; Q. No: 8; Male). An expert of QA proposed a second reason, related to the unwillingness of some staff to share data: *"Some faculty do not like to publish their work or share course and student data with another sector in the*

university because they believe it is a kind of breach of privacy." (Interview; respondent: E18; Q. No: 6; Female). The third reason, raised by a management stakeholder, relates to some individuals' anxiety about the change e-management may cause to their work position or style*, "The reason for resistance could be an idea that e-management tools may upset individuals' prestige or their style of slow working, and it will push them to complete their tasks. In addition, it possibly poses a threat to the special business they do during official work time."* (Interview; respondent: M13; Q. No: 5; Male).

To address these problems and other stakeholders' challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

- The university has to make the goals of the new e-system clear to everyone, and ensure that they understand that those goals must be achieved in a limited time frame.
- It is very important to ensure proper workshops and training programs are available at the right times and provided by professional experts in those areas in order to highlight the advantages of e-management and how it can be used in QA operations. This has to be done before the launching of the e-system.
- Using an e-learning system is a great way to train faculty members to improve their digital skills in QAP, even at a distance.
- To deal with the resistance of older staff the institution should try to support them by engaging young staff to do the work with them until they understand the new way of working.

7.3.7.3 Technical Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

The most critical challenge mentioned by the respondents with respect to the technical challenges was ensuring that an e-management system is suitable for the operation of QA in accordance with the needs and requirements of the university. A QA stakeholder commented, *"There is difficulty in finding an effective system and useful applications for managing all QAP accurately."* (Interview; respondent: QA15; Q. No: 10; Male). This may make the university build and develop the e-management system of QA in accordance with the available financial and human resources, and, in this regard, a management stakeholder proposed the following question: *"Can the university design a system to support all QAP, or just a basic one for the upload and download of files?"* (Interview; respondent: M9; Q. No: 4; Male).

Some respondents emphasised that it would not be easy to build and develop a huge e-management system, and there are a number of issues that must be taken into account, which can pose a challenge to the university, including:

- *"The university must get support from specialists and experts in computer science and administration,"* suggested a management stakeholder. (Interview; respondent: M9; Q. No: 5; Male).
- *"We need to define the objectives of the new system and the QA requirements,"* a QA stakeholder suggested. (Interview; respondent: QA19; Q. No: 7; Male).
- *"The new system has to be easy to develop, learn, use and update,"* added another QA stakeholder. (Interview; respondent: QA10; Q. No: 5; Female).
- *"If we build a system that meets NCAAA standards, what about the standards and requirements of international bodies? Some colleges seek accreditation from international bodies for their academic programs,"* a QA stakeholder pointed out. (Interview; respondent: QA2; Q. No: 9; Male).

In addition, due to the sensitivity of the data stored in the e-management system – for example, private information about individual and the institutional performance – one expert asserted that securing data will be a big challenge, and she wondered, *"Since the data on the system will be sensitive, is the system secure enough that no one can hack it?"* (Interview; respondent: E18; Q. No: 7; Female).

The respondents provided the following suggestions to overcome potential technical challenges:

- Although the university has a vast IT infrastructure and high state of readiness, the new e-system for QA operation will involve thousands of stakeholders, thus, the university infrastructure needs to be expanded.
- It is important to establish an information centre in the Deanship of Development and QA, to link and promote communication between all university sectors.
- It is important that the system is easy to learn and uncomplicated, otherwise the user will feel frustrated and will return to a traditional way of working.
- To increase the staff desire to use the new system, it has to be easy to use, facilitate the process of obtaining accurate information, analyse data and provide reliable results to decision makers for the improvement of plans.

7.3.8 Perceptions about the Research

The participants also were asked whether there was anything else about QA or e-management and the links between them that they think is relevant, and had not already discussed in the interview. They provided some interesting comments about the importance of the research and its potential contributions to the field of QA.

A number of respondents pointed out that the research has gained special importance because it linked two important themes in modern educational management. As one management stakeholder said, *"You are working on two areas that most people believe in nowadays. First, quality, which is important even in our religion, and second, technology, which is a big part of our lives."* (Interview; Respondent: M9; Q. No: 6; Male).

A QA expert added, *"The research has original ideas, particularly integrating QA with e-management areas. E-management is really helpful in educational management. It will reduce the bureaucracy that is killing the development plans."* (Interview; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 8; Female).

In addition, another expert anticipated that this study would provide solutions to a number of problems in the QAP, *"I am happy about this study and I hope it will contribute in providing many solutions for problems relating to QA. The university has a great history and has a big impact on society, so it should be in an excellent position among other organisations."* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 7; Female).

In relation to the interview questions, an educational administration expert commented, *"The interview questions were very good and they covered all the aspects of the issue."* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Q. No: 9; Male).

Regarding the e-management potential, an expert of QA hoped that, *"the study will provide recommendations in taking strong steps to establish a full e-management system to manage QAP, because it will be very helpful in communication, saving time, improving the flow of transactions, and documentation."* (Interview; Respondent: E18; Q. No: 8; Female).

7.3.9 Summary

This part of this chapter provides a detailed report on the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. The following is a summary of the main issues that arose:

- *Understanding the concepts of quality and QA*

  This theme included two sub-themes: The first one presented an overview of the respondents' views about the importance of implementing a system of QA in HE. In addition, there were different views about the role of QA in HE; for example, some participants believed it led institutions to achieve their goals, monitor the education system and achieving accreditation. The second sub-theme provided some of the respondents' definitions of QA.

- *The reality of QA operation*

  This theme included three sub-themes. In the first, the views of respondents about the extent of awareness and understanding of the QA were reviewed. The data indicated notable improvement in this area. The second part highlighted the roles carried out by the participants of the QA operation, which revealed the extent of their knowledge of their responsibilities. The third sub-theme summarised the answers of participants regarding a number of points of the reality of QA operation at the university.

- *Stakeholders' engagement in QA operation*

  This theme focused on stakeholders' participation in the operation of QA and included four sub-themes. The first explored the views of respondents about participating in the operation of QA. Data indicated that there were different levels of participation, from active participation to outright rejection, for many reasons. Secondly, respondents' perspective about the availability and clarity of stakeholders' engagement standards. The third sub-theme explored the nomination of individuals to work in the offices and committees of QA. The data pointed to the absence of clear criteria for nomination. The last part of this theme focused on the difference in the level of stakeholders' involvement in the operation of QA between the old and newly established colleges.

- *Staff development*

  Two sub-themes were generated in relation to staff development. First, the importance of training programs and workshops to spread the culture of QA and

train staff on the QAP. The second sub-theme presented a brief overview of available training programs for the operation of QA.

- *Engagement challenges*

  Under the umbrella of stakeholders' engagement in QA operations, a large number of challenges were repeatedly noted by participants. These challenges were distributed into five sub-themes: management challenges, stakeholders' challenges, challenges in the operation of QA, staff development challenges and incentives challenges. In addition, a number of proposals to overcome those challenges were explored.

- *The potential importance of e-management services to QA operation*

  The focus of this theme was on three issues: the availability of e-services that support the operation of QA, the concept of e-management and, finally, what e-management can offer in terms of QA operation from the standpoint of stakeholders. According to the majority of interviewees, the case study university made large steps in launching e-management applications; however, they believed more efforts were required to get the most out of e-management applications, particularly in terms of supporting the QA operations.

- *Potential challenges and solutions of applying e-management to QA operation*

  Despite the lack of e-management applications currently running QA, respondents expected a number of challenges that may be faced when e-management is applied. Challenges were divided into three sub-themes: management challenges, stakeholders' challenges and technical challenges. To confront these potential challenges, a number of suggestions proposed by the participants were presented.

The next section will present the analysis of the qualitative data collected through focus groups.

7.4 Focus Group Analysis

In this study, two focus groups were used as a complementary method of data collection to clarify and expand data gathered through other methods (see appendix 3). It was helpful in generating an in-depth understanding of the experiences and views of three elite stakeholder types (management, QA, and internal and external experts) about the operation of QA in the case study university. Several crucial issues emerged in the two discussion groups, as reflected in seven themes:

1. The reality of QA operation
2. Management challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
3. Stakeholders' challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
4. QAP challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
5. Staff development challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
6. Potential of e-management, challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
7. External challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

The first theme drew on an overview of the reality of QA practice in the university, while the main focus of the rest of themes outlined the expected challenges facing the operation of QA, and proposed suggestions and solutions from the stakeholders' perspectives.

7.4.1 The Reality of QA Operation

In relation to the development of QA operation and its current practice in the case study university, there are three groups of views:
Some stakeholders believe that notable progress has been made in the spread of the QA culture throughout the university, and that there is good practice for QAP in a number of university sectors. An internal QA expert stated, *"Quality culture has become widespread among students, faculty, and managerial levels at the university."* (Focus group; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 9; Female).

However, in the discussion sessions, many stakeholders emphasised that there is a decline in the operation of QA and this has led to a sense of frustration in stakeholders. An expert explained the situation*: "In 2011 the university achieved great parts of the work; however, the processes have taken a long time. This led to frustration over not achieving the target results in a timely manner."* (Focus group; Respondent: E25; Q. No: 1; Male). A member of the QA committee added, *"In fact, I note there is a decline in the operation of QA, almost back to square one. All the work already completed became old before the required results were achieved. Therefore, it needs to be updated."* He also pointed out the reason for the decline of the operation*, "The problem arises because the procedures move very slowly among stakeholders and at managerial levels."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 11; Male).

The third group of views highlighted the difference in the operation of QA between old established colleges and newly established colleges. A number of stakeholders believe

there is a good practice of QAP in the new colleges because they were established based on high quality standards. One of the QA stakeholders pointed out the factor behind the good QA practice: *"They have clear plans and descriptions of academic programs. Therefore, they are carrying out QAP on a smooth and ongoing basis."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA22; Q. No: 1; Male). In addition, the stakeholders indicated another factor behind the continuing development in newly established colleges, namely the great financial support provided by senior management. One of the participants expressed the opinion that, *"I can say that new colleges get high financial support from senior management – more than the old ones. New colleges with high financial support can attract qualified staff to come and work within their departments."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 9; Female).

On the other hand, some participants explained the decline of QA operation among the older established colleges, one management stakeholder stating that, *"There are old colleges that have old academic plans with a high number of students and a low number of qualified staff… all these factors lead to a limited practice of QAP."* (Focus group; Respondent: M11; Q. No: 9; Male).

7.4.2 Management Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Participants indicated a number of managerial and organisational challenges that they believed hinder the operation of QA and the effective involvement of stakeholders.

Most stakeholders believe senior management is responsible for providing an appropriate regulatory environment for the application of a QA system, through the provision of necessary support. However, in the current situation, some stakeholders stressed that the support of senior management is inadequate. Some managers of QA offices have offered excuses in this regard; one of them said: *"The senior management has a desire to achieve QA standards; however, they are busy with many issues and cannot provide sufficient support for QAP."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 12; Male). Another one added, *"Everyone has a desire for QA and is working hard, but we need more time."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA19; Q. No: 8; Male).

In regard to incentives, some participants pointed out that at the beginning of the QA project, large financial incentives were offered to individuals who worked on the QA project; later, the senior management suddenly limited the incentives for some tasks and completely stopped them for others. A QA expert called this *"a big mistake,"* and he

commented that, *"Unfortunately, members are accustomed to completing these tasks for financial incentives; therefore, when the incentives stopped, they stopped working hard."* (Focus group; Respondent: E25; Q. No: 2; Male).

From another angle, some participants raised the problems of the weakness of the power and authority that the Deanship of Development and QA have, and how that can disrupt communication between the deanship and stakeholders. They believed that the current management hierarchy hinders direct communication between university staff in order to follow up the QAPs and monitor the operation. One QA office member provided the following example:

"Academic departments do not respond to the requirements of the Deanship or QA offices within the colleges unless there is an order from the Deans of colleges. This always disrupts passing requests and suggestions to departments and makes it difficult to carry out the required improvements." (Focus group; Respondent: QA24; Q. No: 1; Male).

In relation to the above case, a QA expert explained how the weak communication between even the QA offices affected the QA operation achievement, *"There is a disconnect between the QA offices in the men's sections and women's sections, regarding the operation of QAP. This leads to poor follow-up of operations and delay in achievements."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 10; Female).

To overcome these problems and other management challenges, the respondents provided the following suggestions:

Suggestions and solutions proposed by management stakeholder:

- Senior management must be resolute in their decisions about the adoption of the QA system, monitor its implementation, and focus on key issues.
- In the university hierarchy, the Deanship of Development QA should be linked to the university President's Office, as opposed to the Vice-President's Office, as it is now. This would give more power and prestige to the deanship.
- Establishing a mentoring system would ensure that faculty and staff make good use of the large budget available to support the QA operation.
- The role of senior management in the QA operation must be enhanced through the provision of sufficient support.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by QA stakeholder:

- Senior management should support this project through meetings, interviews and discussions with staff, which would lead to a high level acceptance among staff.
- Conduct continuous workshops to ensure the majority of stakeholders understand the objectives of the QA.
- Financial incentives should be disbursed and then gradually stopped when individuals understand the importance of QAP.
- The senior management do not always have to try to convince the resisters, especially after the QA system has been adopted for some time. Staff must be obliged to do the required work.
- The senior management should grant more authority to the Deanship of Development and QA to contact academic departments directly.
- Transactions within managerial levels should be speed up, such as applying e-systems to avoid delays in the QA operations.
- The senior management has to ensure that all managerial levels have a clear understanding of the work required to support QA operations.
- The Deanship of Development and QA should work as a consulting and monitoring section, and as a link between academic departments and managerial levels.
- It would be better to follow a friendly approach in solving problems and overcoming challenges, even if this takes more time.
- Transparency and credibility in QA operations should be enhanced.
- The Deanship of Development and QA should continue visiting the QA offices periodically and follow up the processes in all sectors of the institution.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by internal and external experts:

- The senior management should provide sufficient financial, technical and information support to help members to get their work done.
- The senior management should promote the view that the QA project is not only the responsibility of the Deanship of Development and QA, but that everyone has a role and responsibility to make progress in the operation of QA.
- Academic departments should have greater powers to do QAPs, such as reviewing the descriptions of curriculums and the annual reports of academic staff, because the academic department knows more about their own strengths and weakness than any other department in the institution.

7.4.3 Stakeholders' Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

One of the major stakeholders' challenges noted by the participants is the presence of a large number of individuals who do not wish to participate in the QAP and may sometimes resist the procedures. Participants indicated a number of reasons behind these attitudes:

1. A lack of awareness of QA. *"There is a lack of awareness of the importance of QA, so there is no desire to do its processes,"* an expert stated. (Focus group; Respondent: E25; Q. No: 3; Male).
2. A lack of understanding of QAPs. *"The majority of faculty members have no clear understanding of, or a background in, QAPs,"* said a QA stakeholder. (Focus group; Respondent: QA19; Q. No: 9; Male).
3. The number of procedures. *"There are too many QAPs and they take a long time to do,"* added a member of QA office. (Focus group; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 10; Male).
4. No incentives. *"Faculty members are feeling frustrated because there are no incentives,"* said a stakeholder of QA committee. (Focus group; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 13; Male).
5. Workload. *"Faculty members have a lot of management tasks in addition to their teaching hours,"* remarked a QA stakeholder. (Focus group; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 6; Female).

In the discussion about the powers of the staff of the Deanship of Development and QA and the staff of QA offices in monitoring the QA operations and stakeholders' performance, some participants confirmed that the majority of QA staff do not use their monitoring powers to avoid personal conflicts. One of the QA staff pointed out that,

"There is a concern about using the powers because it could cause personal problems among those working in quality units, and among deans, heads of departments and members of the colleges and departments..." (Focus group; Respondent: QA24; Q. No: 2; Male).

Another QA stakeholder believed that this case reflected the culture of the stakeholders in the institution, and he expressed that,

"Unfortunately, there is no clear line between work and interpersonal relationships… This is a common issue in the culture of the institution. As a result, the staff of QA offices do not use all their powers to follow up or auditing QAPs, in order to avoid personal conflicts." (Focus group; Respondent: QA2; Q. No: 11; Male).

The respondents also proposed the following suggestions to deal with stakeholders' challenges:

Suggestions and solutions proposed by management stakeholder:

- Financial incentives are very important for all, especially for those who are working on QAP.
- The academic workload should be decreased for QA staff to give them enough time to follow up QAP within their departments.
- Faculty members need direct support and following up to an accomplish QA requirements. Hence, it would be great to form a qualified team to provide faculty with needed support on a hotline.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by QA stakeholder:

- There are several ways to encourage stakeholders to complete QA requirements, whether financially or morally, such as: extra pay per additional hour worked or per task, honoring their achievements in public or official occasions, giving holiday tickets, decreasing academic workload, promoting the reputation of good staff, providing thank you cards and involving faculty members in university decision-making discussions.
- Link the QA tasks with the annual performance assessment report.
- Count the management of QA and QA tasks as a part of academic workload.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by internal and external experts:

- Faculty members need continuous training, support, motivation, obligation and performance monitoring.
- Departmental coordinators must receive additional training to practice QAP and follow up procedures, as they are in a position to provide support to department staff.
- Faculty members have to know what tasks are required of them, and what is expected of them during each semester.
- Clear criteria should be given for the QAP best practices.
- Senior management should honor good staff in the implementation of QAP. This should continue until the culture of quality becomes common among the institution’s members.
- Promoting the value of self-discipline and religious morals might lead individuals to work harder to achieve quality standards.

- It is necessary to increase job satisfaction and loyalty to the organisation, and then activate the control system.
- A QA expert must be installed in each college to support the operation of QA.

7.4.4 QAP Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Participants frequently pointed out the large volume of paperwork when considering the challenges facing the QAP. They thought that this was a heavy burden of time-consuming work, and this may contribute to the reluctance of some stakeholders to participate in the operations. In this instance, the majority of participants confirmed that the use of e-management applications was essential to manage and speed up the process. A key stakeholder of QA stated:

"The biggest challenge of QAPs is that there is a lot of paperwork. Members consider this a heavy burden of work. We need to shift from manual work to the use of technology in the implementation of the QA operations and managing its documents." (Focus group; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 7; Female).

A number of participants commented that information played a primary role in the operation of QA. However, obtaining the required information in timely manner is a crucial challenge in the university. A management stakeholder highlighted the reasons:

"There are difficulties in accessing information at the university, first, because there is no e-system for QA. Second, many bureaucratic procedures need to be done before required information can be received from some departments." (Focus group; Respondent: QA19; Q. No: 10; Male).

English being used as on the forms and documents used in the QA operation represented a significant challenge, most participants believed. They attested that the language barrier causes many problems, especially given that the majority of the university staff do not speak English. An expert of QA described the situation:

"Currently, we are required to fill out the QA forms in English. This is big obstacle for colleges that teach in Arabic, and the Deanship of Development and QA seem unable to resolve the issue... thus, faculty members fill in the forms and write their reports in broken English... which leads to inaccurate work. We need a decision that abolishes the obligation to use English in the operation of QA tasks. (Focus group; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 8; Female).

Some participants identified a lack of comprehensive evaluation and careful analysis for QA practices. This problem confuses people in the institution, who do not know whether they are on the right track, or making progress. An external QA expert outlined that,
"There is a lack of neutral systematic studies to analyse and identify weaknesses in the QAP. We need to conduct studies to help us to analyse the reality of practice and to plan for the future – studies like this one." (Focus group; Respondent: E17; Q. No: 10; Female).

In order to overcome the QAP challenges, respondents raised the following suggestions:
Suggestions and solutions proposed by management stakeholder:

- Facilitate the operation of QA by applying an e-system.
- Minimize the number of QAP.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by QA stakeholder:

- Compose QA committees within departments to offer support for members who face difficulties in completing the processes.
- There is a need to focus on explaining three things to academic members: basic quality concepts, how to describe the curriculum, and how to write a good report at the end of each semester.
- Lecturers from the university who are interested in QA must be attracted and involved in a comprehensive training program about quality concepts and the QAP, then distributed within university departments.
- Shifting the QAP from manual entry to an e-system would increase the staff acceptance of QA, especially those who consider the paperwork of QA to be a heavy burden.
- As most of the university colleges teach in Arabic, having QA forms in Arabic makes more sense than having them in English, though English forms must still be available for non-Arabic staff.

7.4.5 Staff Development Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Most participants agreed that continuous staff development is required to provide individuals with sufficient knowledge in relation to QA and improve their skills in carrying out QA requirements. However, the data indicated that available training programs and workshops are inadequate and do not meet the needs of stakeholders. One QA stakeholder claimed that, *"There are insufficient training programs and workshops. They are just on*

the general issues of QA, and do not provide sufficient details about the processes." (Focus group; Respondent: QA7; Q. No: 11; Female).

Another challenge outlined in the discussions is that a significant number of staff have not received adequate QAPs training. A QA expert stated, *"A lot of faculty members need to be trained to do QAPs in the right way. They need workshops to train them in filling out forms and preparing required documents."* (Focus group; Respondent: E16; Q. No: 9; Female).

Several suggestions were provided by participants to overcome staff development challenges. Some management stakeholders highlighted the need for practical training and workshops to help faculty members to understand the QAP and fill in the forms step-by-step. In addition, participants outlined the following solutions:

Suggestions and solutions proposed by QA stakeholder:

- Training must continue with a high level of quality, and attract well-qualified QA experts to train faculty members.
- It is very important that external trainers understand the culture of the institution and community.
- Training programs must be continually assessed, reviewed and evaluated.
- It is important to develop comprehensive obligatory training programs that target both new and old faculty members in the university, based on their needs and the institution's needs.

Suggestions and solutions proposed by internal and external experts:

- Enhance communication between the Deanship of Development and QA in order to know the type of training desired by university staff, suitable times, and where and how the training programs should be provided.
- More financial support is required to conduct training programs and workshops to train leaders and faculty members within the institution. In addition, unlimited financial support is also needed to attract international QA experts to work at the university.

7.4.6 Potential of E-Management, Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

In the focus groups, participants emphasised a large number of potential contributions that might be provided by e-management applications in the operation of QA, which can be summarised in the following points:

- Enhanced communication between the institution sectors, departments and stakeholder of QA.
- Facilitating and following-up the QAPs and reviewing completed forms.
- It has a significant role in speeding up the process of managing information and keeping the documents.
- Facilitating the processes of accessing information quickly and safely.
- It can be used to analyse QA data and provide accurate statistics in a shorter time.
- It can be used to evaluate the performance of QA offices and identify the strengths and weaknesses in each department in the institution, accurately and quickly.
- It can be used to build an integrated database of faculty members, which shows their abilities and qualifications, and audits their work performance.

However, the data showed that there are two key issues concerning stakeholders in relation to the application of a new e-management system for QA operation. Firstly, information security; one director of QA office believed that,
"We are supposed to make an electronic copy and a hard copy of our work, especially in the beginning stages of applying the new system, because we could face technical problems that may cause a big loss of information." (Focus group; Respondent: QA10; Q. No: 8; Female).

The second issue is that the application of a new system of this kind will radically change the system of management, which will be a challenge for the university staff. One QA stakeholder proposed that, *"Applying new management system needs an induction program and workshops to familiarise staff with the new way of carrying out the work."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA22; Q. No: 2; Male).

In order to solve the above challenges and obtain the most of e-management, some QA stakeholders remarked that before applying a new e-management system there is an urgent need for sufficient practical training programs explaining the new work process for the

university staff. In addition, the university should offer sufficient technical support with the e-management system for QA operation. Some internal and external experts also emphasised that more support and encouragement would be required from the senior management to use e-management applications in the operation of QA.

7.4.7 External Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) is an independent national body concerned with assessment and academic accreditation, to ensure the quality of HE in KSA. It has adopted a combined mechanism for accreditation and presenting QA requirements in a unified framework. Some participants believed that NCAAA support is insufficient and therefore the majority of Saudi universities do not achieve satisfactory achievement in QA and accreditation. A stakeholder of QA claimed that, *"There is no real support and follow up from NCAAA for QA and accreditation operations in KSA universities, so the universities have not achieved what they want, so far."* (Focus group; Respondent: QA15; Q. No: 14; Male).

In addition, some participants criticised what NCAAA was done for the launch of a unified QA and accreditation system, treating all universities in the same manner without taking into account the individual circumstances of each institution and their available resources. They considered that this constituted a major challenge facing Saudi universities that were still in the initial stages in the field of QA. An expert of QA commented that, *"NCAAA is responsible for universities' failure in QA and accreditation, because they asked universities to apply advanced steps of QA while the majority of universities have no experience in this field."* (Focus group; Respondent: E25; Q. No: 4; Male).

Some QA stakeholders demanded more support, pressure and strong decisions from the Ministry of Education to motivate all Saudi universities to achieve QA standards quickly. In addition, some experts contended that NCAAA has a good system and standards, but need to increase their impact on Saudi universities to enhance the QA operation.

7.4.8 Summary

This section of this chapter presents a detailed report on the qualitative data collected through focus group discussions. The following is a summary of the main themes:

- *The reality of QA operation*

This theme gave an overview of the current reality of the operation of QA in the case study university. Some participants pointed to an improvement in the spread of the culture of QA, but the majority of them stressed the low level of practice of QA in recent times, for multiple reasons. On the other hand, a number of respondents pointed out that a number of factors have helped create good practice in the newly established colleges.

- *Management challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions*

  The data indicated a number of management challenges facing the operation of QA, which may affect stakeholders' participation. Among the most prominent challenges were: the weakness of support from senior management, lack of incentives and lack of communication between sectors in the organisation. In addition, suggestions proposed by participants to overcome these challenges were summarised.

- *Stakeholders' challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions*

  The data identified a number of challenges relating to the attitudes of stakeholders towards the operation of QA. Resistant individuals or an unwillingness to engage in QAP were the main challenges. The other major challenge is the culture of the individuals in the institution, which drives them to not use their powers to monitor work in order to avoid personal conflicts. In addition, some suggestions made by participants to overcome those challenges were presented.

- *Operation of QAP challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions*

  In this theme, challenges associated with operating QAP were highlighted. The data pointed to a number of challenges: the volume of paperwork, the lack of access to required information and the use of English as a key language to write reports and fill out forms. A summary of suggestions made by participants to deal with these challenges was presented.

- *Staff development challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions*

  This theme focused on participants' views about the importance of staff development in enhancing their engagement in the operation of QA. In this regard, the data identified a number of challenges limiting how stakeholders benefit from development; these data also indicated that the quality and quantity of training programs does not meet the needs of individuals, or the stage of QA operation in the institution. In addition, suggestions made by the participants to overcome these challenges were summarised.

- *Potential of e-management, challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions*

This theme presented a summary of participants' views about what e-management could provide in the field of QA. In addition, some of the potential challenges to the application of e-management in the operation of QA were discussed, and solutions to these expected challenges were proposed.

- *External challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions*

  This last theme reviewed the most prominent external challenges facing the operation of QA in the case study university. The data indicated that there is inadequate support from the body responsible for ensuring the quality of HE in KSA, NCAAA. In addition, some stakeholders believed that the unified system imposed by NCAAA does not comply with the conditions of some universities, which makes it difficult for them to achieve the objectives of QA. Some suggestions were given by participants to address the external challenges.

The next section will present the analysis of the qualitative data collected by the open-ended questions on the questionnaires.

7.5 Open-ended Question Analysis

The fourth part of the questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions regarding the challenges that might confront the engagement of stakeholders in the operation of QA, the potential solutions to overcome these challenges, and whether the participants would like to add any comment about this study (see appendix 6. A, B). Those questions were answered by most of the 301 participants, who represented 17.52% of the study population. They represented various nationalities, genders, work occupations, roles and own experience. The responses analysed, then grouped in the following themes:

1. Management challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
2. Stakeholders' challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
3. QAP challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
4. Staff development challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
5. Incentives challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions
6. External challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

The responses were presented in the following tables. The tables below showed that most respondents tended to identify challenges faced in the operation of QA, as well as the potential solutions to overcoming them. In addition, interesting comments about some of the research aspects were outlined.

7.5.1 Management Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Challenges	Potential Solutions
• Centralised and personal management approach • Personal initiatives • Quality concept is superficial • Lack of explanation • QA goals not clear • Bureaucracy makes the process slow • Imposing the QA system • Lack of communication between stakeholders • No clear plan • Miscommunication between QA authorities and faculties • Number of students and classes • Number of qualified members	• Clear plan with restricted deadlines • Spreading the quality culture throughout the institution • Solving problems gradually • Offering experts in each college • More support from senior management • Exclude the old bureaucratic procedures • Increase cooperation between the university sectors • Use e-management applications in QA • All stakeholders have a role in QA • QA authorities need more powers • Conduct meetings with transparency and credibility

Table 7. 5 Management challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

Nearly all respondents referred to the management behaviour in the case study university as a challenge that limited engagement in QA operations. They considered the centralised management approach an obstacle for the operation of QAP. One participant said that one of the obstacles is, *"The university was based on the central and personal management approach."* Another participant indicated how personal administration could affect the QA operation, *"The QA idea is supported by some leaders in senior management and when they leave their positions the work may stop."*

In addition, participants claimed that the concept, vision, process and future of QA in the university is vague. They believe that the reason for this is management behaviour during the introduction of a quality assurance system and the bureaucracy in the implementation of QAP. One of the participants stated, *"Goals are unclear and the process is slow because of bureaucracy."* Another commented, *"The university management did not explain to staff what QA is; QAP was applied directly."*

Another challenge emphasised by respondents is the lack of communication between management levels and faculty members. One participant stated, *"There is a lack of communication between managers and staff."* Another participant added, *"There is miscommunication between the Deanship of Development and QA and faculty members."*

In addition, another major challenge was the large number of students per faculty member. Participants believed this makes it hard to do the procedures and achieve QA standards. One of the participants stated, *"It is difficult to achieve QA standards when the university has a huge number of students and classes, particularly given the limited number of well-qualified faculty members available."*

Respondents proposed some factors that would help to overcome the management challenges and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in QA operation. These factors are summarised in the following points:

- Exclude the old bureaucratic procedures from the university community and replace them with modern managerial regulations that support change and development.
- Raise support for the QA project from senior management.
- Increase cooperation between colleges, administrative sectors and the Deanship of Development and QA.
- Develop a clear plan with restricted deadlines.
- Spread the quality culture, not just as terminology, but also as something that can be achieved in reality.
- Solve the QA operation problems gradually, using a friendly approach.
- Employ a quality assurance expert in all colleges, and employ qualified individuals to manage QA offices.
- Conduct the QAP based on high transparency and credibility.
- Use e-management applications to speed up managerial tasks.
- All managerial levels and individuals have to have a clear role in the QA project.
- Give the Deanship of Development and QA more powers to monitor and control the QA operation. Inform all university staff at all levels to cooperate with the Deanship.
- Conduct regular meetings with high transparency and credibility, and increase participation in decision making.

7.5.2 Stakeholders' Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Challenges	Potential Solutions
• Absence of QA culture among students and staff • No clear vision about QA • A lack of awareness of QAPs and standards • Limited participation opportunities • Not enough trust in all members • The majority of individuals at QA offices are non-Saudi • Limited time with heavy workload	• Spread the QA concept • Provide equal engagement opportunities • Involve students and staff in discussions about QA • Engage faculty in decision making • Ensure faculty members use their power to monitor and impose work • Share QA results with high transparency • Decrease academic workload • Count the work of QAPs as part of academic workload • Provide incentives • Employ more faculty members • Employ more QA experts • Replace inactive individuals

Table 7. 6 Stakeholders' challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

Many respondents noted that there was an absence of QA culture among students and staff in the university. This probably led to a lack of awareness and understanding of the concept of QA. One of the respondents stated, *"Some faculty members have no clear idea about the QA concepts and standards."* Another respondent added, *"There is a lack of awareness of QAP, among both students and faculty members."*

Respondents also described participation opportunities in the university, in many aspects, such as decision-making, as limited, and that powers were granted to a few people who were trusted by the university senior management, regardless of their qualifications. This management approach makes it challenging for the stakeholders to get opportunities to participate in QA operations. One of the participants said that, *"Working on QAP is limited for some people; there is not enough trust in all faculties… and no chance for everyone to contribute in QAP."* Another participant commented, *"Not all faculty have a chance to participate, as the university depends on trusted people, not qualified people."*

In addition to the limited opportunities, some respondents seemed frustrated because their suggestions and comments about the QAP were being ignored and this made them lose the inclination to work on this project. One of the participants stated,

"The university management and the QA authorities do not make use of feedback that we provide, or that students provide. Our suggestions to improve QAP are usually ignored."

Another issue concerning a number of respondents is that a large proportion of QA staff are non-Saudis. The challenge here lies in two aspects, first, employing newly qualified staff when non-Saudi faculty members leave the university, for any reason, after they have gained great experience of QA and undertaken expensive training. Second, based on the rules of the system, only Saudi faculty can occupy management positions, therefore, the number of Saudis who can work in QA is few, because they are preoccupied with management duties in addition to their teaching hours. One respondent stated, *"The majority of individuals in QA offices are non-Saudi faculty who obtain experience and attend training, then leave the university after a short time."* Another Saudi participant indicated that, *"I cannot carry out QA tasks… I have tight time constraints with many management commitments and a heavy teaching load, in addition to research work."*

In trying to anticipate solutions for stakeholders' challenges, the respondents proposed the following points:

- Increase efforts to spread QA concepts and ensure the goal of QA is clear for all faculty members.
- Provide equal opportunities for all staff to participate in the formulation of the university's vision and strategic plan.
- Involve students and staff in discussions and decision-making about QA, its plan and how to improve it.
- Oblige resistant faculty to apply QA standards.
- The results of QAP should be presented to staff and students, with high transparency.
- Decreasing academic load will allow faculty sufficient time to do QA tasks.
- Count the work hours of QA operations as part of academic workload, or provide sufficient financial incentives.
- Employing more faculty members will help to open up more classes and decrease student number in each class, therefore, QAP can be better applied.
- Offer a QA expert hotline to provide support for staff.
- Replace inactive individuals in QA offices.

7.5.3 QAP Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Challenges	Potential Solutions
• Bureaucratic procedures • Too many QA tasks • Using hard copies of forms • Inefficient follow-up process • A weakness of monitoring QAPs	• Establish a unit monitoring system • Offer experts in each sector • Establish an e-management system • Exclude bureaucratic procedures • Explain QA requirements • Establish a database of quality experts

Table 7. 7 QAP challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

Many participants stated that there were obstacles in the operation of QA because of certain aspects affecting workflow. Some respondents raised bureaucracy as the biggest challenge decreasing the speed of work and delay access to required information. One participant commented that, *"Bureaucracy is a serious challenge. For example, there is a long process for reforming QA office committees and for distributing roles."*

Another participant provided another example, *"It is difficult to access information because of bureaucratic procedures. You need to contact many departments to get permission before accessing the information that you need."*

Most respondents described the work of QA as a heavy burden and as having many procedures that take a long time to complete, especially since the procedures are performed by hand. *"We have limited time and QA operation takes a great number of work hours – this is too much."* Another respondent added that,
"We still using hard copies of forms to complete QA requirements… this is an inconvenient way of working for both staff and students."

Another challenge of continuous evaluation and following up QA is the absence of sufficient monitoring and assessment techniques. One of the participants talked about the failure of some QA work, *"It is difficult to follow up QAP and make sure it is applied in efficient way."* The potential reason for this was outlined by another participant, *"Deanship of Development and QA has weak techniques for monitoring and following up QAP."*

The participants also proposed some facilitating factors to enhance the operation of QAP, summarised below:

- Establish a controlling system for following up QAPs that consists of incentives to encourage staff.
- Employ experts in each sector to explain the concepts of QA and supervise the operations.
- Make the QA requirements more clear to faculty members.
- Exclude bureaucracy and routine processes.
- Using e-management applications in all university managerial tasks will facilitate, speed up and enhance the operation of QA, and measure performance.
- E-management applications allow all staff members to participate in an easy way. It can provide statistics at any time, and help follow up QAP with less effort and time.
- Establish a database containing information about QA experts in the university so everyone can reach them to obtain advice and support.

7.5.4 Staff Development Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Challenges	Potential Solutions
• Insufficient professional training • Insufficient trainers for QAP • Unfair distribution of training opportunities • Few options of training times • Training announcements are made late or not at all • No encouragement to attend training	• Develop training program for staff • Conduct training in e-management • Offer qualified trainers • Offer training about QA office management • Focus on the QAPs • Give equal training opportunities • Offer training at various times • Encourage staff to attend training

Table 7. 8 Staff development challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

With regards to staff development in QA, a number of respondents stressed the importance of training programs and workshops in overcoming the challenges of understanding the QAP. However, the data referred to several challenges that may limit the benefit to stakeholders of QA workshops and training.

Regarding the availability of training, a number of respondents believed that there was insufficient professional training in addition to the lack of well-qualified trainers. One participant said, *"No sufficient or professional training."* Another one stated, *"I have attended several workshops for QAP, but the trainers were not professionals."*

Respondents also said that training opportunities are not distributed fairly among faculty members, where opportunities tend to be given to the managers more than others. One respondent pointed out, *"Training is limited for some selected people and for those in managerial levels."*

In addition, some problems relating to the organisational aspect of training programs were raised by participants. They indicated that the training and workshops sessions are held at limited times, which are incompatible with the work circumstances of either management members or academics. One participant stated, *"There are few options of times to attend training programs... the available training is in unsuitable for my time commitments."*
On the other hand, some participants emphasised that the training programs and workshops are not announced in a way that encourages everyone to attend them. One participant said, *"The announcements about training are usually late and training is conducted in insufficient time, with no encouragement to attend."* Another one said, *"As a faculty member, I have not been invited to any kind of workshop relating to the QA."*

To obtain the most from development staff, the participants proposed the following points:

- Develop a training program about QA for all staff at all levels.
- Offer qualified trainers.
- Train the university staff to use e-management applications in completing QAPs.
- Conduct training for those at the managerial levels in how to manage QA offices.
- Training should focus on applying the QAPs in reality more than in theory.
- Provide equal opportunities for all staff to attend training and workshops.
- Offer training at various times to suit staff circumstances.
- Encourage staff to attend training by linking training credits to the faculty upgrade.

7.5.5 Incentives Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Challenges	Potential Solutions
• Insufficient moral or finance incentives • Incentives low and delays in receiving them • Not enough encouragement from senior management	• Rewards system • Provide incentives on completion of QA tasks • Put more trust in faculty members • Giving financial dues quickly • Pay for QA tasks, like teaching hours

Table 7. 9 Incentives challenges, proposed suggestions and solution

The data referred to the limited incentives available and the delay of distribution as serious challenges. One of the participants highlighted the lack of financial and moral incentives, *"It is additional hard work without sufficient moral or financial incentives."* Another participant expressed his displeasure because of the lack of incentives and the delay in the disbursement, *"Incentives are low and there is always a delay too... this is frustrated."* Respondents also emphasised that the encouragement provided by senior management is greatly valued by the stakeholders; however, it is not always available. One of the participants commented, *"Everyone wants to get the appreciation of the top management levels, but there is not enough encouragement from senior management."*

In addition, the participants proposed some facilitating factors to overcome the above challenges:

- Establish an equitable incentive system.
- Link QA tasks with the incentive system and provide incentives for faculty who accomplish their work quickly.
- Encourage faculty members to participate in the QA operations by giving trust and more powers.
- Rebuild trust between the Deanship of Development and QA and the team at QA offices.
- Pay for QA tasks like additional teaching hours.

7.5.6 External Challenges, Proposed Suggestions and Solutions

Challenge	Potential Solutions
• Unsuitable international QA standards	• Reform QA standards to suit the community culture • Use quality concepts known in the community • Promote religious values among individuals

Table 7. 10 External challenges, proposed suggestions and solutions

A number of respondents raised the issue of the lack of a suitable system used for QA, standards affiliated with the culture of the Saudi academic community and the language spoken by most of its members. One of the participants stated, *"The university depends on international criteria that is not suitable for a Saudi university."*

Construction of a QA system based on the culture of the local community, language and religion was the most frequent proposal by the participants to ensure a high level of quality in HE. One of them stated, *"It is urgent to reform the QA system and its standards to be more suitable for Arabic culture, otherwise it would be difficult to convince people to participate in the operation of QA."* Another participant suggested that, *"We should use the concepts and highlight the value of quality that exist in our religion and culture. This will help to enhance awareness among university staff."*

In a society characterised by faith, respondents believed that the beliefs of individuals could play an important role in convincing stakeholders to commit actively to the participation of QA operations. One respondent commented, *"Promoting religious values among individuals will increase their commitment to QA work, and make them work harder to achieve high quality performance, especially since the Islamic religion emphasises the importance of those values."*

7.5.7 Perceptions about the research

Most respondents provided additional comments, in which they expressed the importance of this research in the field of QA and the importance of taking advantage of the findings and recommendations reached by the study. Repeated comments can be summarised in the following points:

- The study is important because it discusses new and sensitive issues in Saudi universities.
- This study will provide a good contribution to the development of QA concepts and practices in HEIs.
- Decision makers should benefit from this study's results and recommendations.
- This study will be a good source for researchers and practitioners in QA.
- It is a good study because it links QA and e-management. E-management can provide statistics to predict future challenges.
- The questions in the survey were designed in a very good way, which helped form an in-depth exploration of these issues.

7.5.8 Summary

This section presented the analysis of qualitative data collected through the three open-ended questions on the questionnaire. The six themes generated focused on the challenges confronting stakeholders in the operation of QA. These challenges related to management, stakeholders, QA operation, staff development, incentives and external factors.

Tables were used to summarise the challenges and the potential solutions indicated by participants to overcome them in the context of current practice. A detailed analysis was presented for each theme, with illustrative extracts from participants' responses.

7.6 Conclusion

The qualitative data analysed in this chapter were collected from three main groups: management stakeholders, QA stakeholder and internal and external experts, using two methods: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The third source of qualitative data analysed in this chapter was a large number of stakeholders in the case study university; these data were obtained by the questionnaire's open-ended questions. A thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected by these three methods. The analysis followed six main phases: (1) familiarisation and organisation; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes and (6) writing up. The data in these three sections were presented in a more detailed discussion, supported by illustrative tables for comparisons, and extracts of the participants' responses.

The report of the data analysis of the semi-structured interviews was displayed in seven main themes and each theme included several sub-themes: the understanding of quality and QA concepts, the reality of QA operation, stakeholders' engagement in QA operations, staff development, the challenges of engagement, the importance of e-management and its potential use in QA operations, along with the potential challenges and solutions of applying e-management in QA operations.

The report of the data analysis of the focus groups was displayed in seven main themes: the reality of QA operation and the challenges of management, stakeholders, the QAP, staff development, the potential of e-management and external challenges. All challenge sub-themes were followed by suggestions and possible solutions proposed by participants.

The report of the data analysis of the open-ended questions from the questionnaire was displayed in six main themes, focused on the challenges that confront stakeholders in the operation of QA. They were: management, stakeholders, the QAP, staff development, incentives and external challenges. All themes were followed by suggestions and possible solution proposed by participants.

In conclusion, it was noted that qualitative data from three sources agreed on a number of aspects related to the research issues, though there were differences in some other aspects. In order to develop a framework to enhance QA operation in HE, it is essential that the researcher takes into consideration the issues arising from all types of data, whether qualitative or quantitative. The discussion chapter, chapter nine, will consider all types of data and put forward a summary of results in order to provide adequate answers to the research questions.

The next chapter, chapter eight, will present an analysis of the quantitative data collected by the questionnaire.

Chapter 8: Quantitative Data Analysis

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concentrates on reporting the analysis of the quantitative data. The views of three groups of stakeholders (faculty members, administrators, QA members) about the extent of stakeholders' engagement in QA, critical operation issues, the potential of e-management in QA operations and the readiness of the case study university were explored using a questionnaire with a larger sample (n=301). The questionnaires were applied simultaneously with other data collection methods. This was helpful in establishing a comprehensive overview of QA operation in the case study from a large number of stakeholders' practices, and in establishing a broad impression of their attitudes to the potential of e-management in QA operations. The results of the quantitative dataset will further be discussed, together with those stemming from qualitative datasets, in the next chapter (9).

8.2 The Questionnaire

As explained in detail in chapter six, the questionnaire was constructed by reviewing relevant existing literature, the findings of the scoping study, and the official guideline of the QA system by NCAAA (see chapter 6). It was designed to collect data from three groups, faculty members, administrators and QA members, to answer the following operational research questions:

1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?
2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?
3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

In order to answer these questions, the questionnaire given to the participants of this study consisted four main sections:

First section: Personal Information (Nationality, Gender, Occupation, Experience).

Second section: Engagement in QAP (24 Statements):

- *First Dimension: Stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QAPs (14 Statements)*
- *Second Dimension: Operational issues in the development of QAPs (10 Statements)*

Third Section: E-management and QA (19 Statements):

- *First Dimension: Stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward e-management in the QA (14 Statements)*
- *Second Dimension: Institutional requirements toward e-management in the operation of QAPs (5 Statements)*

Fourth Section: Open-ended questions (3 Questions) – as discussed in chapter 6, this section provided the participants with an opportunity to record any challenges they confront in the operation of QA, to provide any recommendations for overcoming challenges, and, finally, to comment on any aspect of this research. The data obtained in this section was analysed in chapter 7, based on thematic analyses, and was treated like the other qualitative research dataset.

It is noteworthy that a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the attitudes of respondents toward particular statements. The participants marked their agreement with five categories; the higher the category chosen, the greater the strength of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neither (N), 4 = Agree (A) and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The participants drew a tick symbol (✓) on their choices.

Data management and analysis were performed using SPSS software (Version 22). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the sample, to check and to summarise the dataset by using numbers or graphs, addressing specific research questions (Pallant, 2010, Brace et al., 2012). To analyse section one of the questionnaire, the researcher adopted the descriptive statistics method, using frequencies and percentages to describe the sample based on respondents' nationality, gender, occupation and experience of the QA field. In addition, based upon the ratings given by participants, the frequency and percentage for each statement was determined, and a rank order was assigned to each statement according to its agreement values. This procedure was applied to each dimension in sections two and three.

Moreover, in order to identify whether there were statistical differences between the participants in terms of their engagement in QA operations according to their nationality, gender, occupation and experience, non-parametric tests were also applied. The Likert scale is described as an ordinal scale of measurement to order categories (McCrum-Gardner, 2008, Cohen et al., 2007), and for this Pallant (2010) suggested that "non-parametric techniques are ideal for use when you have data that are measured on nominal

(categorical) and ordinal (ranked) scales," (p. 213). In addition, the assumptions of normality were not met in the dataset; therefore, parametric procedure analyses would not appropriate. Therefore, non-parametric tests were applied because they do not make assumptions about the underlying population characteristics and distribution (Pallant, 2010, Allen and Seaman, 2007, Cohen et al., 2007). In this research, two non-parametric variance tests were applied to the first dimension of section two of the questionnaire in order to find out whether there were statistically significant differences between the sample groups in each category in terms of engagement in QA operation, and to highlight these differences. The first test was Mann-Whitney, which is equivalent of the *t*-TEST; this was employed to explore whether two groups of the categories (nationality, gender and experience) have statistically significant differences. The Kruskal-Wallis (sometimes referred to as Kruskal-Wallis H), which is equivalent of the one-way ANOVA, was the second test employed to carry out the comparison between three groups of occupation (faculty member only, administrator and QA member), to explore whether there were statistically significant differences between the three groups. This was followed up by a post-hoc test based on the Kruskal-Wallis test, in order to figure out which of the groups were statistically significantly different from one another. Where this was identified, this difference was tested using a Mann-Whitney or Kruskal-Wallis test. Mean Rank was used to describe the direction of the difference (i.e. which group is higher) (Pallant, 2010, Brace et al., 2012, IBM, 2016).

In this chapter, the demographic data of the full sample is represented by a bar chart. The rest of the analysed data is presented in several tables containing various grouped items to explore the responses of participants to each dimension of the questionnaire. The order of the numbers of items in the tables were kept as they were in the applied questionnaire (see appendix 6. A, B).

8.3 Demographic Information

This first section of the questionnaire asked for personal information to identify the characteristics and distribution of participants based on their nationality, gender, occupation and experience with QA. As described in chapter 6, the total number of questionnaire respondents was n=301. The participants included n=153 (50.8%) Saudi and n=148 (49.2%) non-Saudi participants. The distribution of participants, based on their gender are n=154 (51.2%) male and n=147 (48.8%) female. The occupation phase included three categories of stakeholders. As the data indicates, n=210 (69.8%) participants fall into

the category of faculty member, whereas the main occupation of the rest of participants is distributed between the category of administrator n=40 (13%3) and QA member n=51 (16.9). In terms of experience, n=97 (32.2%) of the participants have no experience and n=204 (67.8%) had some experience in the field of QA. The following figure 8.1 illustrates a summary of the demographic distributions of the full sample questionnaire participants.

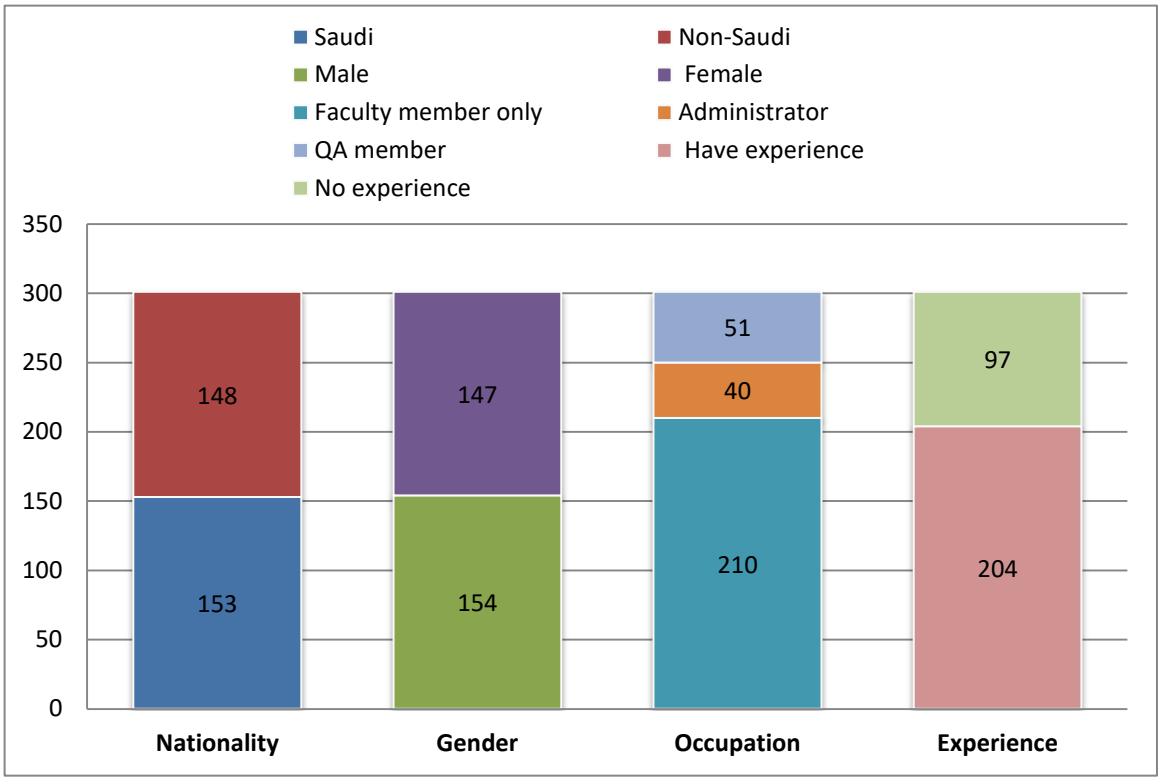

Figure 8. 1 Demographic distributions of the full sample based on nationality, gender, occupation and experience

From the bar chart above, it is notable that the number of participants in the nationality and gender categories are convergent. This may give some kind of assurance that each group in each main category of the study population received an equal opportunity to participate in this study, enhancing the generalisability of the results. The distribution of occupation among participants seems normal, as does the fact that faculty members represent the largest number of educational institutions. The significant disparity in the number of stakeholders who had experience in QA and those who do not reflects the reality of the distribution of people at the university. More than two-thirds having experience in QA can be seen as a positive sign, especially when considering QA is still a new trend to the university.

8.4 Stakeholders' Engagement in the Operation of QA

This section reports the results of the first dimension of the second section of the questionnaire, which was focused on the exploration of the extent of stakeholders' engagement in QA operation across different levels of the institution. The 14 statements in this dimension were identified by the researcher from the QA system handbook by (NCAAA, 2011). These statements present positive engagement attitudes and practices of stakeholders in QA operation. The following table 8.1 presents distributive statistics, including percentages, frequencies of the full sample responses for the 14 statements, and their rank, based on the frequencies of agreement (A + SA) to identify which items had the highest or lowest incidence of agreement within the study.

Table 8. 1 Descriptive statistics of the full sample perceptions and attitudes toward the engagement in the operation of QA

N	Statements	Frequencies & Percentages										Rank
		SD		D		N		A		SA		
		%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	
1	I have a clear understanding of the concept of QA and its standards and its processes	1.7	5	15.0	45	9.6	29	46.2	139	27.6	83	222 / R8
2	I know what is required of me to be an active participant in QAP	2.3	7	12.3	37	12.3	37	43.9	132	29.2	88	220 / R9
3	I seek to achieve QA standards in the performance of my daily work	1.0	3	4.0	12	8.0	24	46.8	141	40.2	121	262 / R1
4	I encourage and motivate my team to engage in QAP	1.7	5	4.7	14	15.3	46	42.2	127	36.2	109	236 / R5
5	I support the university policies and efforts to achieve QA standards	2.7	8	7.6	23	12.6	38	35.5	107	41.5	125	232 / R6
6	I participate in surveys presented by the university about QA issues	2.7	8	11.0	33	15.6	47	38.9	117	31.9	96	213 / R10
7	I get involved in interviews and workshops carried out within the University to discuss the quality of policies, regulations and procedures	3.7	11	10.6	32	21.9	66	36.5	110	27.2	82	192 / R11
8	I participate in the processes of improvement and development of the university and/or the department where I work	2.0	6	6.6	20	9.3	28	34.9	105	47.2	142	247 / R4

9	I take initiative to improve the institutional performance and/or academic programs	4.0	12	5.6	17	15.6	47	36.5	110	38.2	115	225 / R7
10	I participate in planning for QAP and its activities within the university	3.7	11	15.0	45	25.9	78	33.6	101	21.9	66	167 / R14
11	I participate in the self-assessment process for considering institutional performance	4.3	13	13.0	39	24.9	75	34.2	103	23.6	71	174 / R13
12	I encourage students to participate in the process of academic programme evaluation	2.0	6	5.6	17	9.0	27	38.2	115	45.2	136	251 / R3
13	I am willing to participate in committees and units that are active in QAP	2.3	7	4.0	12	7.3	22	40.9	123	45.5	137	260 / R2
14	I participate in the processes of collecting QA standards evidence, preparing reports and designing improvement plans	4.3	13	13.6	41	19.6	59	36.5	110	25.9	78	188 / R12

The data in table (8.1) is quite important as it indicates there is a wide positive agreement about engagement with QA operation, ranging from n=167 (55.5%) to n=262 (87%) of the people surveyed. These interesting responses reveal that stakeholders are aware of the importance of engagement in QA operation and participate in its process to reasonable levels. However, it is notable that the responses to statements 1 and 2 indicate that approximately a quarter of respondents were uncertain about or have no clear understanding of QA concepts, standards and processes, and they may not know the requirements of active participation.

From the rank column, it is noteworthy that the most statements (five) agreed by the participants were in R1: *"I seek to achieve QA standards in the performance of my daily work;"* R2: *"I am willing to participate in committees and units that are active in QA processes;"* R3: *"I encourage students to participate in the process of academic programme evaluation;"* R4: *"I participate in the processes of improvement and development of the university and/or the department where I work;"* and R5: *"I encourage and motivate my team to engage in QA processes,"* with frequencies and percentages of (n=262, 87%; n=260, 86.4%; n=251, 83.4%; n=247, 82.1%; n=236, 78.4%, respectively). By considering these statements, we can see that the participants showed high willingness to achieve QA standards, involve themselves in QA groups, and spread the culture of QA

between students and faculty. Interestingly, these items described attitudes toward engagement at an individual level that could be based on self-motivation.

On the other hand, the five statements showing least agreement by the participants were in R14 *"I participate in planning for QAP and its activities within the university;"* R13 *"I participate in the self-assessment process for considering institutional performance;"* R12 *"I participate in the processes of collecting QA standards evidence, preparing reports and designing improvement plans;"* R11 *"I get involved in interviews and workshops carried out within the University to discuss the quality of policies, regulations and procedures;"* R10 *"I participate in surveys presented by the university about QA issues,"* with frequencies and percentages of (n=167, 55.5%; n=174, 57.8%; n=188, 62.4%; n=192, 63.7%; and n=213, 70.8%, respectively). The presence of these items at the end of the participants' agreement list may shed light on the level of participation at the University for stakeholders. It raises a question about the extent of opportunities offered by senior management for stakeholders to engage in the most significant management operations at more than an individual level, such as policy formulation, planning, process evaluation and decision-making. We cannot be certain of the reasons for the low agreement by participants on these items before looking at these results side by side with the qualitative data, but perhaps we can suggest that one of the reasons is that participation in the management and development of QA at the university level may not be available to everyone.

In order to obtain an in-depth exploration of stakeholders' engagement in the QA operation, it would be helpful to find out to what extent they engage, based on their nationality, gender, occupation and experience of QA, and whether there were different levels of engagement between the groups in each category.

8.4.1 Stakeholders' Engagement in QA Operation, based on Nationality

Table 8. 2 Groups engagement difference, based on nationality

Test Statistics[a]	
	Engagement
Mann-Whitney U	7228.500
Z	-5.427
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Grouping Variable: Nationality	

Table 8. 3 Groups engagement rank, based on nationality

	Nationality	N	Mean Rank
Engagement	Saudi	153	124.25
	Non-Saudi	148	178.66
	Total	301	

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between Saudi and non-Saudi stakeholders' engagement in QA operation. The data showed that the engagement was significantly greater for non-Saudi stakeholder (MR = 178.66) than for Saudi stakeholder (MR = 124.25), (U = 7228.500, N_1 = 153, N_2 = 148, p = .000, two-tailed).

8.4.2 Stakeholders' Engagement in QA Operation, based on Gender

Table 8. 4 Groups engagement difference, based on gender

Test Statistics[a]	
	Engagement
Mann-Whitney U	9371.500
Z	-2.582
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010
a. Grouping Variable: Sex Male & Female	

Table 8. 5 Groups engagement rank, based on gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank
Engagement	Male	154	163.65
	Female	147	137.75
	Total	301	

From Mann-Whitney test results, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in engagement in QA operation depending on the gender of stakeholders. The engagement was statistically significantly higher for male (*MR* = 163.65) than for female stakeholder (*MR* = 137.75), (U = 9371.500, N_1 = 154, N_2 = 147, p = .010, two-tailed).

8.4.3 Stakeholders' Engagement in QA Operation, based on Occupation

Table 8. 6 Groups engagement difference, based on occupation

Test Statistics[a,b]	
	Engagement
Chi-Square	20.575
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Faculty or Admin or QA.M.OF	

Table 8. 7 Groups engagement rank, based on occupation

Ranks			
	Faculty or Admin or QA.M.OF	**N**	**Mean Rank**
Engagement	Faculty member only	210	137.23
	Administrator	40	164.44
	QA Member	51	197.15
	Total	301	

The results of Kruskal-Wallis test in table 8.6 showed that there was a statistically significant difference in engagement in QA operation between the different occupation groups, $\chi 2(2, N = 301) = 20.575$, p = .000, with a mean rank engagement score of 137.23 for faculty member, 164.44 for administrator and 197.15 for QA member. Although the results showed that the QA member group was the group with the highest engagement rank, it is also important to identify which groups were statistically significantly different from one another. A post-hoc test based on Kruskal-Wallis was conducted and its results presented in the following table (8.8).

Table 8. 8 Engagement differences between three occupation groups

Sample1	Sample2	Test Statistic	St. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Faculty member only	QA Member	-59.914	13.577	-4.413	.000	.000
Faculty member only	Administrator	-27.204	15.004	-1.813	.070	.209
Administrator	QA Member	-32.710	18.369	-1.781	.075	.225

The results in the above table indicate a significant difference in the engagement in QA operation between the group comprising faculty members and the QA member group at the significant level of (p = .000). However, there was no statistically significant difference in engagement in QA operation between the faculty member group and the group comprising administrators (p = .209), or between the group of administrators and the group comprising QA members (p = .225).

8.4.4 Stakeholders' Engagement in QA Operation, based on Experience

Table 8. 9 Groups engagement difference, based on experience

Test Statistics[a]	
	Engagement
Mann-Whitney U	5191.500
Z	-6.669
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Grouping Variable: Experience	

Table 8. 10 Groups engagement rank, based on experience

	Experience	N	Mean Rank
Engagement	No Experience	97	102.52
	There is Experience	204	174.05
	Total	301	

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between participants in engagement in the QA operation, based on experience. The data showed that engagement was significantly greater for stakeholders with experience in the QA field (MR = 174.05) than for stakeholders with no experience (MR = 102.52), (U = 5191.500, N_1 = 97, N_2 = 204, p = .000, two-tailed).

In summary, the results of the difference and variance tests showed that more stakeholders who engage in QA operation are non-Saudi, male, QA members with experience in QA. It is worth mentioning that these results have agreed to a large extent with the results of the qualitative data. These results will be discussed side-by-side in the next chapter in an attempt to identify the reasons behind them.

8.5 Operation Issues in the Development of QAP

The second dimension in section two of the questionnaire has 10 statements relating to operation issues in the development of QA. The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was to explore stakeholders' perspectives toward some QA operation issues. The following table (8.11) displays distributive statistics, including percentages, frequencies of the full sample responses for the 10 statements, and their rank based on frequency of agreement (A + SA).

Table 8. 11 Descriptive statistics of the perceptions and attitudes toward some operation issues in the development of QAP of the full sample population

N	Statements	Frequencies & Percentages										Rank
		SD		D		N		A		SA		
		%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	
15	The policies and decisions of university management support the participation of academics in QA	4.0	12	10.3	31	19.6	59	42.2	127	23.9	72	199 / R3
16	The university encourages academics to participate in QAP sufficiently in financial and moral terms	10.3	31	20.9	63	24.3	73	28.6	86	15.9	48	134 / R7
17	There are opportunities available for participation in making decisions about the operation of QA	12.3	37	25.6	77	29.2	88	24.3	73	8.6	26	99 / R10
18	There are sufficient training opportunities to develop skills for practicing QA processes	10.3	31	21.9	66	29.2	88	28.6	86	10.0	30	116 / R9
19	Training programs and workshops about QA are held at appropriate times	9.6	29	20.9	63	30.2	91	28.6	86	10.6	32	118 / R8
20	I consider QAP as part of my duty or career	0.7	2	3.3	10	11.0	33	41.5	125	43.5	131	256 / R1
21	Taking part in QA processes requires difficult skills and lots of knowledge	3.3	10	15.6	47	15.6	47	39.2	118	26.2	79	197 / R4
22	QA processes lead to increase in working hours without sufficient financial incentives	3.7	11	10.3	31	19.6	59	28.6	86	37.9	114	200 / R2
23	There is an overlap in the roles and responsibilities across staff in quality committees and units	2.0	6	10.0	30	35.9	108	31.2	94	20.9	63	157 / R6
24	QA standards are suitable for the University culture	2.3	7	12.6	38	28.6	86	37.9	114	18.6	56	170 / R5

The above table (8:11) indicates that the majority of participants (n=256, 85%, R1) agreed that QAPs are part of their duty or career. However, nearly two thirds of the respondents (n=200, 66.5%, R2; n=197, 65.4%, R4) agreed that *"QAPs lead to increased working*

hours without sufficient financial incentives," and *"Taking part in QAPs requires difficult skills and lots of knowledge."*

In relation to the policies and decisions of the university in supporting stakeholders' participation in QA operations, the majority of respondents (n=199, 66.1%, R3) believed *"The policies and decisions of university management support the participation of academics in QA."* However, it is interesting to note that only a third of the participants (n=99, 32.9%, R10) believed *"There are opportunities available for participation in making decisions about the operation of QA."* It is also worth noting that less than half of the sample (n=134, 44.5%, R7) believed *"The university encourages academics to participate in QAP sufficiently in financial and moral terms,"* whereas (n=73, 24.3%) were uncertain and (n=94, 31%) disagreed. These results suggest that the policies and decisions that support stakeholders' engagement may not be implemented effectively.

Regarding the availability of staff development programs for engaging in QA operations and whether the programs take place at suitable times, the participants' responses to statements number 18 and 19 were convergent. Although the data indicated that over a third of that sample (n=118, 39% R8; n=116, 38.6%, R9) agreed that there are sufficient programs in appropriate times, the results indicated (n=91, 30.02%, R8; n=88, 29.02%, R9) of the respondents were uncertain and (n=92, 30.5% R8; n=97, 32.2%, R9) disagreed.

8.6 Stakeholders' Perceptions and Attitudes toward E-Management in QA Operation

The purpose of the first dimension of the third section of the questionnaire is to explore stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward the potential of e-management in the operation of QA. The following table (8.12) displays distributive statistics, including percentages, frequencies of the full sample responses for the 14 statements, and the rank based on the frequencies of agreement (A + SA).

Table 8. 12 Descriptive statistics of the full sample of participants' perceptions and attitudes toward e-management in the QA operation

N	Statements	Frequencies & Percentages										Rank
		SD		D		N		A		SA		
		%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	
1	EM contributes to strengthening the processes of supervision, follow-up and review of individual and organisational performance, accurately and objectively	0.3	1	6.6	20	27.6	83	38.2	115	27.2	82	197 / R10
2	EM facilitates access to the views of QA stakeholders inside and outside the university	0.7	2	6.0	18	25.2	76	41.5	125	26.6	80	205 / R8
3	EM reduces the bureaucracy and contributes to restructuring QAP to become more effective	0.7	2	5.0	15	22.9	69	38.9	117	32.6	98	215 / R5
4	EM enhances quality principles such as objectivity, transparency and accountability	1.0	3	5.6	17	23.6	71	39.5	119	30.2	91	210 / R6
5	EM provides sufficient information for decision makers about the performance of QA committees/units, and their strengths, weaknesses and achievements	1.0	3	5.6	17	26.9	81	37.5	113	28.9	87	200 / R9
6	EM improves and speeds up decision-making processes at QA managerial levels	1.0	3	2.7	8	24.6	74	41.2	124	30.6	92	216 / R4
7	EM facilitates the process of managing information and maintains data confidentiality	1.0	3	3.3	10	20.3	61	41.9	126	33.6	101	227 / R2
8	EM provides an opportunity for QA stakeholders to work from anywhere and at any time	1.7	5	3.0	9	21.6	65	35.2	106	38.5	116	222 / R3
9	EM helps to accelerate the achievement of QA standards and to maintain what has been achieved	1.3	4	5.3	16	21.6	65	38.5	116	33.2	100	216 / R4
10	EM used to link committees/ quality focused units together in an integrated e-communication system will enhance coordination and cooperation	1.7	5	4.7	14	24.6	74	39.2	118	29.9	90	208 / R7
11	EM helps the optimal use of human and financial resources in the QAP	1.0	3	5.6	17	24.3	73	38.5	116	30.6	92	208 / R7
12	EM supports the continuity and efficiency of QAP operation	0.7	2	4.7	14	22.9	69	39.5	119	32.2	97	216 / R4

13	I use e-management tools such as information management systems and communication systems in the operation of QAP	3.3	10	10.0	30	23.6	71	37.5	113	25.6	77	190 / R11
14	There is an urgent need to develop a strategy to use e-management applications for managing QAP	1.3	4	3.7	11	14.3	43	36.5	110	44.2	133	243 / R1

It is clear from the above table (8.12) that over two thirds of the people surveyed have positive perceptions and attitudes toward the potential of e-management in enhancing QA operation. Interestingly, all 14 statements received high agreement responses, ranging from (n=190, 63.1%) to (n=243, 80.7%).

The statements that received the highest agreement were in R1: *"There is an urgent need to develop a strategy to use e-management applications for managing QAP;"* R2: *"EM facilitates the process of managing information and maintains data confidentiality;"* R3: *"EM Provides an opportunity for QA stakeholders to work from anywhere and at any time;"* R4: (3 items)*"EM improves and speeds up the decision-making process at QA managerial levels;" "EM helps to accelerate the achievement of QA standards and to maintain what has been achieved;"* and *"EM supports the continuity and efficiency of QAP operation;"* and R5: *"EM reduces the bureaucracy and contributes to restructuring QAP to become more effective,"* with frequencies and percentages of (n=243, 80%, R1; n=227, 75.5%, R2; n=222, 73.7 %, R3; n=216, 71.7 %, R4 (3 items); n=215, 71.5%, R5 respectively). This result is somewhat counterintuitive as the literature suggested that introducing new system of work could create critical challenges, such as individuals' resistance. However, what stands out here is that stakeholders have a great belief in the urgent need for taking advantage of e-management; in addition to that, they have a lot of positive perceptions toward the role that e-management could play in managing QA operation, process development, information management, accomplishing tasks, speeding up decision-making, achieving standards, and supporting work continuity and efficiency. These results could be considered a good indication that stakeholders are willing to use e-management applications and they would be widely accepted in QA operations.

Although respondent agreement on the 14 statements was convergent, it is obvious that in the statements that met with the least agreement, ranging from (R6 – R11) approximately a quarter of the full sample chose (Neither). Although the reasons for this choice remain unclear, it is possible that some stakeholders have never experienced e-management

applications and therefore they are not sure about their utility for the QAP, or they have experienced it and are not convinced of its usefulness, or that there is an ambiguity in how to use them in the QAP, where the regulations have not yet been put in place in this institution.

Another interesting result appeared in statement number 13: *"I use e-management tools, such as information management systems and communication systems in the operation of QAP."* This statement received the highest rate of disagreement from participants (n=40, 13.3%), with (n=71, 23.6%) of participants selecting (Neither). This can result from many reasons, such as a lack of computing skills, a lack of awareness of e-management or a resistance to new styles of work.

8.7 Institutional Readiness toward E-Management in the QA Operation

The intention of the second dimension in the third section of the questionnaire was to explore stakeholders' perspectives toward the readiness of the case study university to take advantage of e-management in QA operations. The following table (8.13) shows the data obtained in this part of the questionnaire, displayed as distributive statistics, including percentages, frequencies of the full sample responses for the 5 statements, and the rank based on the frequencies of agreement (A + SA).

Table 8. 13 Descriptive statistics of the full sample of participants' attitudes toward institutional readiness for e-management in the operation of QA

N	Statements	Frequencies & Percentages										Rank
		SD		D		N		A		SA		
		%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	
15	The university management structure is suitable for using e-management applications in the operation of QAP	6.6	20	12.0	36	31.2	94	31.9	96	18.3	55	151 R3
16	The University provides an advanced electronic environment that stimulates the use of e-management applications for QAP	5.0	15	12.0	36	24.9	75	34.9	105	23.3	70	175 R2
17	Managing QAP electronically requires expensive equipment and systems	4.0	12	14.0	42	37.5	113	27.2	82	17.3	52	134 R4
18	The university holds appropriate training programs to train faculty members for using e-management applications in the operation of QAP	10.3	31	23.9	72	29.2	88	24.6	74	12.0	36	110 R5
19	The use of e-management applications in the operation of QAP requires encouragement, both financially and morally	3.0	9	4.7	14	18.9	57	33.6	101	39.9	120	221 R1

Table (8.13) shows that the analysis of frequencies and percentage indicated that around two thirds of stakeholders (n=221, 73.5%, R1) perceived *"The use of e-management applications in the operation of QAP requires encouragement, both financially and morally."* This result reflects the belief of stakeholders that incentives can play a significant role in shifting the QA operations to be managed electronically, and in encouraging them to attain a high level of engagement in QA operations.

Regarding the required infrastructure of e-management for QA operations, slightly more than half of the sample were uncertain (n=113, 37.5%, R4) or disagreed (n=45, 18%) that *"Managing QAP electronically requires expensive equipment and systems."* This could be a result of the perspective that e-management applications for QA will not cost the

university a lot, depending on what is already available. This interpretation might be supported by the agreement of a high proportion of survey respondents (n=175, 58.2%, R2) that *"The University provides advanced electronic environment that stimulates the use of e-management applications for QAP."*

Interestingly, the data also highlights that although half of the sample (n=151, 50.2%, R3) tend to believe *"The university management structure is suitable for using e-management applications in the operation of QAP,"* the rest of the sample were uncertain (n=94, 31.2%) or disagreed (n=56, 18.6%). This may mean that a large number of stakeholders think that there is a need to review the current administrative structure of the university to ensure its suitability for the application of e-management in QA operations.

It is also observed from the table that just over a third (n=110, 36.6%, R5) of the full sample were agreed that *"The university holds appropriate training programs to train faculty members for using e-management applications in the operation of QAP,"* whereas (n=88, 29.2%) were uncertain, and (n=103, 34.2%) disagreed. It should be noted that the stakeholders perceived that the university might not offer the required training to take on the advantages of e-management and this issue needs to be considered before the use of e-applications becomes widespread.

8.8 Summary

The data analysed in this chapter was gathered by a questionnaire given to three groups of stakeholders: faculty members, administrators and QA members. The first section of the questionnaire asked all the research population to provide personal information in relation to their nationality, gender, occupation and experience in the QA field, in order to properly understand the research population characteristics, and furthermore, to figure out whether there is a statistically significant difference between group perceptions of QA operation engagement in each of the four categories. The second and third sections of the questionnaire asked all participants to agree or disagree on a 1-5 Likert scale, with 43 closed items related to the two dimensions of QA: stakeholders' engagement and operation issues; and two dimensions of the potential of e-management: perceptions and attitudes toward the potential of e-management and institutional readiness. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests, and the results presented in graphs and tables.

Overall, the results indicated that there is high positive agreement toward engagement in QA operation. To be precise, participants agreed mostly with items that described the attitudes toward the engagement at an individual level, and agreed least with items which described practices that may need support from the university management. The results of the variance tests revealed that there are statistically significant differences between the participants' responses, depending on their nationality, gender and experience, and between faculty members and QA members. The data indicated that most groups who engaged in the QA operation belonged to the following groups: non-Saudi, Male, QA members and those who had experience with QA. The results also showed that most participants believe QAPs are part of their duties in their career, however, at the same time, a large proportion of them believe they deserve moral and financial incentives for doing these tasks. In addition, the results indicated that despite the fact that the policies and decisions in the university support stakeholders' participation, opportunities to participate are limited.

On the other hand, the results in this chapter indicate that participants showed a wide agreement with the potential effectiveness of e-management in QA operations and for many other purposes. However, some stakeholders were against or uncertain about the role of e-management in QA operation. At this point, it can be inferred from the results that stakeholders, at the core of this operation, need support and encouragement, both financially and morally. Concerning the e-management requirements and the readiness of the institution for implementing these applications, the results indicated that the appropriate infrastructure and advance electronic environment are available in the institution at sensible levels. However, the results also suggest that to access the full potential of e-management in QA, the administrative structure of the institution may need reassessment and appropriate staff development training is required.

The next chapter, therefore, proceeds to discuss the results from the qualitative and quantitative datasets. This will address the research questions from different angles to establish a comprehensive vision of the QA operation in the case study context, and in developing a solid framework to enhance the operation of QA in Saudi HE.

Chapter 9: Discussion and Findings

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical analysis and discussion of the study findings and key themes drawn from the collected data using qualitative instruments (Chapter Seven: interview, focus group, open-ended question), where data were analysed according to the thematic analysis and quantitative instrument (Chapter Eight: questionnaire), and where data were analysed descriptively based on (SPSS) software, with consideration to participants' characteristics. In this chapter, these findings are addressed and synthesised, alongside the previous studies, with a view to answering the operational research questions as follows:

1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?
2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?
3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

The use of mixed methods in this study were key as they helped gather a comprehensive set of robust data. Yin (2014) stresses that obtaining data from multiple sources is a major opportunity to increase the quality of data in case studies. In the current study, these methods were applied simultaneously to create a comprehensive overview of the relevant issues from a range of perspectives, in order to tackle the problem of generalisation within qualitative research and to build a better understanding of the relationship between variables.

It is worth mentioning that an awareness of perceptions gives a researcher an opportunity to confront the perspectives of stakeholders on the issues within a study. These perceptions are very important and could make a significant contribution to drawing a complete picture of current practice, along with exploring the factors and conditions that create this reality. This allows the researcher to use sound and validated data to propose a concrete model for change or reform, which can be placed under the scrutiny of decision-makers in key institutions. However, one of the main issues to be overcome within this study was questioning stakeholders, ensuring impartiality and clarity when exploring their perceptions and attitudes. Because of external pressures and bias it is important to ensure that the responses given are respondents' honest perceptions, particularly in developing

countries where participation in decision-making may be non-existent. Stakeholders may refuse or avoid open participation on issues such as education quality and the government approach in education reform. Surprisingly, the participants in this study showed a great enthusiasm to participate, to provide information and perceptions of the issues raised and demonstrated a high level of desire for change and reform. It seemed as though stakeholders had been waiting for a study of this nature in order to express their views on the issues under scrutiny. They provided interesting comments about the importance of research and its potential contributions to the field of QA and e-management. Some indicated the research has gained special importance because it linked two important themes in modern educational management. As one management stakeholder said, *"You are working on two areas that most people believe in nowadays. First, quality, which is important even in our religion and second, technology, which is a big part of our lives,"* (Interview; Respondent: M9; Male).

Although the participants felt the issues undertaken were sensitive in KSA, they believed this is what makes this study important. An expert of QA added, *"The research has original ideas, particularly integrating QA with e-management areas. E-management is really helpful in educational management. It will reduce the bureaucracy that is killing the development plans,"* (Interview; Respondent: E17; Female). Questionnaire participants were also very optimistic about the role this study could play in helping Saudi universities to achieve their QA goals as it would provide decision makers with definite recommendations and, furthermore, the results will provide a good source for researchers and practitioners in both QA and e-management.

Interestingly, participants were not only impressed at the originality of the research, but also showed their admiration for the data collection techniques and the questions asked. In relation to the interview questions, an educational administration expert commented, *"The interview questions were very good and they covered all the aspects of the issue,"* (Interview; Respondent: M5; Male). Similarly, the participants of the questionnaire stressed that the questions were designed in a very useful way, which helped form an in-depth exploration of the research issues.

This chapter will be presented in three parts. The initial part summarises the results in relation to the general issues of stakeholders' reflections to QA and to the reality of QA operation in the case study university. The second part discusses the aforementioned main

research questions. The last part aims at fulfilling objective number seven of this research by developing a framework that would have a heuristic value to practitioners responsible for QA in Saudi Arabia's HIEs.

9.2 Part 1: The Reality of QA Operation in the Case Study University

Initially, I sought to gather data from the stakeholders about QA operation and the work environment, in order to form a broad picture of QA in the institution and to explore the stakeholders' attitudes, awareness and understandings of QA. This was useful for understanding and interpreting the results in order to discuss the research questions.

9.2.1 Understanding of Quality and QA Concepts

Data showed that there is a common belief among stakeholders that quality in HE is extremely important. Some stakeholders have pointed out that a large part of this interest stems from a religious perspective in a society where the religious aspect has a broad impact on the attitudes of individuals and their working style. At the same time, the stakeholders perceive QA as a new field in Saudi HE. Further, they believe that HEIs have a major responsibility to establish and disseminate the culture of QA in KSA.

This study revealed a number of interesting factors that might play an influential role in the nature of the participation of stakeholders in QA, such as understanding its fundamental concepts. The results of data collected from a great number of stakeholders from multiple levels in the case study university show different understandings of quality and QA on the one hand, and confusion about and uncertainty of those concepts on the other.

The perspectives of the participants in this study about QA, in terms of how the concept of QA is linked to its purpose, are associated with what has been discussed in the literature (Lim, 1999, Brennan and Shah, 2000, Izadi et al., 1996, Harvey, 2008, San and Kong, 2012). The participants at managerial levels believe that QA helps in shaping the organisation's vision and achieving their goals, monitoring the education process, research efforts and the participation of universities in community service. Thus, it seems that QA is associated with all academic and management tasks at universities. However, some administrators have a different perspective, seeing the goal of QA as a means to obtain institutional accreditation, which has become an important indicator of the quality of HE in KSA and the community consider it with respect.

Quality Assurance of Saudi HE requires the fulfilment of 11 standards, which covers all aspects of performance in HEIs (Abdul-Jabbar, 2012). These standards are generally considered good practice in HEIs. Best practices have formulated two sets of standards: institutional standards and academic programme standards (NCAAA, 2011, p. 13, Abdul-Jabbar, 2012, p. 74). It is worth mentioning that in the current study all the administrators agreed on the importance of quality in HE, however, a small group of them did not place much importance on following the procedures of QA. They believed that the pursuit of QA should be an individual act without faculty members being forced to follow specific criteria created by a third-party body, and that the faculty should build its own standards as part of their religious duty. These results are in agreement with the findings of Cheng's (2009) study insofar as professionals, and some academics, are against standards set by external auditors because they believe they have their own ways of explaining the quality of their academic works.

From this case, it can be deduced that some stakeholders have an unwillingness to apply the approach imposed by the NCAAA on universities in KSA to ensure quality, especially since this approach is built on cooperation with international experts, and therefore, those procedures do not fit well with the local institutional culture. For example, one of the experts emphasised the need for procedures and QA standards that are appropriate to the culture of the institution and its objectives and identity. He said: *"Each educational institution has its own goals, priorities and programs. Therefore, the assessment of an institution's performance has to be based on what they want to achieve."* (Interview; Respondent: E20; Male).

Staff who work in QA offices and serve on QA committees showed greater conviction to QA, relying on several considerations relating to the importance of providing education at a high standard. In addition, they believe that the concept of QA varies from one place to another – depending on the nature of the regulatory and educational practices of each institution. Interestingly, the QA team have an obvious concern that the university is able to maintain quality more than achieving quality standards. As one staff member stated: *"It is easy to have quality, but it is difficult to ensure quality and maintain it for years."* (Interview; Respondent: QA10; Female).

Like previous groups, the experts participating in the study stressed the importance of QA in HE, adding the necessity of taking advantage of the potential to enhance the QA

operation, such as using e-applications, and providing appropriate training and continuous evaluation.

Harvey and Knight (1996) argue that staff can define quality concepts and procedures in different ways. Interestingly, the participants in this study follow one set of QA procedures, but the study revealed a lack of consensus among them regarding the definition of QA, and they have provided nine separate definitions (see chapter 7.3.1.2). The definitions of stakeholders in the administrative levels focused on ensuring the quality of inputs and outputs, and their compatibility with the labour market and global standards for education; while the QA teams focused on the role of QA in improving the level of education; and lastly, the experts' definitions revolve around QAPs. The definitions collected from the participants do not demonstrate a deep understanding of QA and its processes, but they instead indicate the presence of a state of uncertainty which may lead to a weakness in the effectiveness of the QA operations. It is expected that these differences are due to a different understanding of the concept and might lead to a different understanding of QAPs, resulting in a disorder in implementation. This was revealed by stakeholders filling in QA forms in different ways depending on their own understanding.

In fact, the variation in the understanding of the staff about the concept of QA in HE is supported by previous findings, such as (Alshahri, 2014). He found that 497 staff of a HE institution in Oman understood the concept of quality in terms of four themes:

> … as a concept that has to do with setting standards for measurement; as a concept that has to do with setting standards to meet the requirements and needs of the stakeholders; as improvements and developments; and as protocols and standardisation of procedures*,"* (p. 167).

Concerning the variety of stakeholders' understandings of QA, this study would agree with Harvey and Green (1993), that instead of looking at a single definition of quality in HE and confronting what could be described as 'a complex philosophical question', it is necessary to recognise the variety of stakeholders' interests and perspectives. The preferences of different stakeholders could be a vital aspect in finding fundamental standards for measuring the quality of HE (p. 29).

The results of data collected from managers' interviews indicated a general improvement in the stakeholders' awareness and understanding of QAP and its requirements, with a clear disparity in the level of understanding of stakeholders and the experience and desire to

accomplish those requirements. Interestingly, the QA group showed a wide knowledge and a broad understanding of QA and its operations. The study revealed that improvement was the result of training programs that have been made available for a limited time to prepare qualified individuals to work in QA offices. However, among university management there is a concern that most of those experts are non-Saudi, which poses a challenge in terms of finding local qualified replacements if non-Saudi staff leave the University for any reason. The lack of expertise in QA continuing in Saudi universities was identified in the study of Abdul-Jabbar (2012).

Regarding the knowledge of stakeholders about their roles in the QA operations, the results revealed that the majority of the participants are aware of their roles and know what they need to do. Among the most prominent roles referred to by stakeholders from the three groups of stakeholders (management, QA, internal and external experts) the focus was on communications between the university sectors, coordination with internal and external bodies and commissions of QA, the deployment of a QA culture, the establishment of QA offices, and monitoring and documentation (See chapter 7.3.2.2).

9.2.2 The Reality of QA Operation

In terms of quality development, the results revealed that the university has two main paths: QA and institutional accreditation. The management of the university took several steps in establishing a number of offices and committees to manage the operation of QA (see 7.3.2.3). However, although these efforts have been made since the launch of the QA project, the results still indicate that there is a slight improvement in the spread of the culture of QA with some good practices in a few sectors of the university. In addition, the stakeholders participating in this study were feeling frustrated because after approximately 5 years the university has not achieved its goals and there has been a recent decline in enthusiasm for the QA operation.

What is curious are the reasons given for what is seen as a failure. The respondents from the elite group indicated that the QAPs take a very long time for bureaucratic reasons. This means that the data and evidence, collected at the beginning and during the work, becomes old before it can be used and is therefore unreliable. When this happens, it is necessary to go back to square one and start the process again. Some of the issues emerging from this study relate specifically to what was discussed in the literature about the conditions of success in the operation of QA in developing countries. Lim (1999) argued that the

implementation of QAP in developing countries is helpful even when the conditions for success are not available. However, the mechanisms should be formulated in the light of developing countries' circumstances. Procedures should be simple and expectations should be unpretentious in the light of the available resources.

In addition to the disadvantages of bureaucracy, it could be that the slow speed of stakeholders' workstyles contribute to infrequent completion of QAPs. This view is supported by the findings of Witte (2008), where a number of professors in German universities postponed the implementation of QA due to their weak convictions, in the hope that the system may abandoned before they had to implement them.

One unexpected finding revealed in this study is the interesting difference between old established colleges and newly established colleges in relation to the development and operation of QA. Implementation of best practices of QA are significantly higher in newer colleges. The participants believed that this difference occurred for several reasons. Firstly, the new colleges were established according to the new global development trends of education, especially in the field of QA. This makes the colleges able to make change, development, improvement and the application of new projects such as QA a priority. Secondly, the new colleges have clear plans, continuous efforts, a low number of students and staff, a progressive review system, accurate descriptions of academic programs, clear and declared processes and requirements. Moreover, the elite groups indicated a third reason: i.e. the newer colleges receive unlimited financial support from the senior management. This helps these colleges to attract qualified staff both nationally and internationally to come and work within their departments.

Furthermore, several factors slow the pace of development and operation of QA in the old colleges – such as the huge number of students and staff, workload, the age of the academic plans and the limited support available from the senior management. Although this result has not previously been identified in other studies, some studies (João Rosa et al., 2006, Cardoso et al., 2013) have noted significant differences between staff attitudes toward QA activities based on their disciplinary affiliation. In addition, there is some evidence that new institutions make greater efforts in QA.

Following this general review of the reality of QA operation in the case study university, the operational research questions will now be addressed.

9.3 Part 2: Discussion and Main Findings of the Research Questions

Q1 In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?

9.3.1 Stakeholders' Engagement in QA Operation

The first operational question of this study explores the extent of stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QA. In order to achieve a valid answer to the question, the researcher believes it is necessary to consider the following issues:

- the stakeholders' awareness and understanding of QA importance and concepts and the importance of engagement in the operation
- the estimation of the level of stakeholders' engagement
- the differences in the level of stakeholders' engagement according to their nationality, gender, occupation and experience
- the availability of a clear guide for the operation and engagement criteria
- the differences of stakeholders' engagement levels in different types of colleges
- staff development in regard to the enhancement of stakeholders' engagement in QA

The result of qualitative data revealed that stakeholders from all levels of the institutions agreed that faculty members have a significant role in QA operation. They believe that accomplishing the QA requirements is a primary part of their academic commitments. In accordance with this result, the quantitative data also showed that there is a wide positive agreement about engagement with QA operation, ranging from n=167 (55.5%) to n=262 (87%) of the people surveyed. What is curious about this result is that the participants showed high willingness toward engagement at an individual level – that could be based on self-motivation – such as achieving QA standards, involving themselves in QA committees and spreading the culture of QA among the university stakeholders. However, from both sources of data, participants agreed that not all faculty members were accepting of change, especially in relation to the QA. There are those who support the project and participate effectively and those who refuse the idea completely for many reasons – such as uncertainty about, or having no clear understanding of, QA concepts, standards and processes. Also they may not know the requirements of active participation, as approximately a quarter of respondents' data to the questionnaire indicated. These findings,

in accordance with Newton (2000), indicate that academic staff on the front line do not accept change easily, nor the requirements and QAPs.

The results revealed much disparity between participants' estimations for engagement in QA at the university. There is a belief that stakeholders take QA requirements seriously and they accomplish the requirements because they consider them to be compulsory. On the other hand, there are those who assert that the engagement level is very low and there are a great number of staff who resist or are disinterested in QA. The study revealed some of the perceived reasons behind the low level of participation as a kind of justification. For instance, the large volume of academic load and / or that QA requirements are administrative matters and should not distract a faculty member from their main tasks, such as teaching and research.

Despite this decline in the level of participation, it is argued that there has been some improvement recently in Saudi universities, as mentioned by an external expert: *"In the majority of Saudi universities, faculty members' participation in QAP is increasing continuously. This is not just in terms of attending workshops or committees' meetings, but also in daily activities involving QAP,"* (Interview; Respondent: E23; Male). This point of view indicates that the level of participation has been very low in the past.

The study revealed that stakeholders' engagement is disparate, too. The data from the questionnaire indicated that the largest group of stakeholders' participating in QA operation is made up of QA members and then administrative and faculty members. Although there was not a statistically significant difference between QA and administrative members, there was a statistically significant difference between QA members and faculty members. There are several possible explanations for this result. Firstly, it is expected that QA members are interested in QA and have a desire to work in this field, and administrative staff members are responsible for managing the operation; therefore, the majority of both groups engage at high levels as they might be the means to QA success. Secondly, as both groups work together in this area, they have acquired more experience than faculty members have. This agrees with the results of this study, in that experience could be a factor in enhancing participation, as the data showed that engagement was significantly greater for stakeholders with experience in the QA field than for others. These findings seem to be consistent with other research, which also found that staff with experience are more amenable to QA activities (João Rosa et al., 2006, Cardoso et al., 2013). This is also

in agreement with Stensaker et al. (2011) who found staff in managerial levels have higher positive perceptions about QA.

One of the significant findings revealed by this study is that there is a wide agreement about the availability of clear guidelines for the operation of QA and standards of effective participation would be influential factors to ensure a high level of participation. In this regard, the results indicated two points of view, firstly there are a few stakeholders who refer to the existence of a clear guide for the operation of QA with respect to certain requirements of the reports and course specification. However, the largest group of stakeholders complained about the lack of standards for effective participation or a guide for the operation of QA. The views of this team can also be divided into two perspectives: the first represents a small group of participants, who believe that there is no need for a guide and standards because the procedures are clear and that stakeholders can achieve QA requirements if they follow the continuous instructions that regularly come from the deanship of development and QA. In addition, the deanship can measure the level of participation of stakeholders through what has been achieved. On the other hand, a large group of participants consider the absence of standards and practical procedural manuals for the operation of QA a critical issue, which has an obvious negative impact. Therefore, they are demanding the provision of clear guidelines in the belief that these would help avoid confusion over both the requirements and the terms included in the forms and reports. Surprisingly, the difference in the stakeholders' understanding of QA requirements and terms may not only lead to an imbalance in the operation of QA, but sometimes also to a conflict among stakeholders, where everyone seeks to perform the procedures as they understand them. A manager confirmed, *"If there are clear standards for participating in QA operation, faculty members will accept them and will work hard to achieve high levels of engagement,"* (Interview; Respondent: M12; Male). The lack of guidance for QAPs, not just in this institution, but also in other Saudi universities, can be considered one of major barriers to successful QA operation (Drendri and Hook, 2007).

Furthermore, the study revealed the absence of definite criteria for the selection of individuals to work in the offices and committees of QA. However, the results suggest that the university administration usually selects individuals who demonstrate a desire to work in the field of QA or have attended training programs and workshops about QA. This passion for quality was seen by the participants as a crucial factor in selecting staff to work

and be involved in the offices and committees of QA, where the work requires considerable effort and extra time.

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter that the reality of QA operation differs in old and newly established colleges. In addition, this study revealed that the stakeholders' engagement in those two types of colleges is different, too. There is a noticeable disparity in participation and there are several factors behind it, such as the nature of the work requirements in a college, support available from senior management, availability of qualified staff, available financial support and the extent of stakeholders' understanding of QAP. Given an in-depth consideration of the engagement of stakeholders in the new colleges, stakeholders in those colleges believe in the importance of QA, accept its benefits, and know how to participate effectively in the operation. The results indicated that this because they have clear plans and deadlines for the implementation of tasks. In older colleges, stakeholders' engagement is fluctuating, due to the concept of quality being unclear and the culture of QA not being pervasive.

Another aspect of the study revealed that conviction and acceptance are critical factors in increasing participation in the operation of QA. For example, the results indicate that participation in the newer colleges is higher because the stakeholders have an interest, desire and a willingness to engage in QA work, – the exception here being the fact that a few of them did not fully engage because they are new at these colleges and need some time and support to adapt. In older colleges, there are those who avoid participating and there are those who completely reject the required QAPs, considering those tasks additional work and not part of their academic work.

Workload emerged as a critical factor affecting the extent of stakeholders' engagement, even in the newer colleges. However, the new colleges have a small number of stakeholders who have a heavy workload. To deal with this issue the QA offices in these colleges offer the stakeholders more time and help to accomplish the QA requirements. Management at the newer colleges encourage their staff to help each other complete the procedures in good time. On the other hand, most old colleges have a huge number of students, staff and academic programs, and thus they find themselves in a critical situation when it comes to applying QA standards. The results showed that stakeholders in the old colleges are under great pressure due to the many commitments of teaching load, meetings and administrative roles within their departments and with the university management.

These pressures lead stakeholders to avoid participation in QAPs, or to be involved (slowly and in inaccurate ways), which could lead to unreliable results. Moreover, these colleges suffer from a lack of financial resources and qualified human resources to support and encourage participation. The results revealed that older colleges lack systems such as performance monitoring and evaluation, documentation, information and statistical analysis. In a few older colleges, some improvements can be noted when even limited incentives, monitoring and follow-up have been put in place.

9.3.2 Staff Development

Yorke (2000) argued that the existence of a quality culture in an institution supports the stakeholders in the fulfilment of the requirements of their duties.

This study revealed that the deployment of QA culture throughout the training programs and workshops is seen as an effective approach in increasing the level of stakeholders' engagement in QA operations. The participants in this study believe that training and workshops make them experts and they can then offer support to their colleagues in their colleges and departments. They also believe that the concept of quality is linked to all academic aspects and faculty members should attend all types of training that could help improve their work skills.

The results indicated that the university offers many opportunities for training and workshops in coordination with internal and external bodies interested in quality in education. These programs are offered in two languages – Arabic and English. Attendance of these programs is not compulsory and only a few colleges encourage their staff to attend.

In order to enhance the stakeholders' engagement in spreading the culture of QA, the deanship of development and QA encourage and support all qualified staff and experts in the university to provide training programs and workshops. However, this study discovered some critical issues in relation to staff development. The participants' perspectives indicate that the available development programs are insufficient and they do not meet the stakeholders’ needs. The training opportunities are not distributed equally and are mostly taken by administrators and individuals working in the QA office. The development programs available provide a theoretical explanation of QA concepts but do not provide practical activities helpful in learning about the QAPs. In practice they are described by

some participants as meetings for the distribution of roles. Those issues may contribute to the reluctance of some faculty members to attend training programs and workshops.

Q2 In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?

One of the challenges of the study was the large volume of data collected. This is a remarkable indicator that there is a crisis around the participation of stakeholders in QA operation, due to a number of factors, such as management issues, individual attitudes, staff development, incentives issues and other internal and external factors.

9.3.3 Management Challenges

This study revealed that there are some management issues posing continuous challenges to stakeholders' engagement. Stakeholders argue that the senior management of the university are responsible for the failure to achieve QA goals so far because some decision makers, and also those with influence in decision-making, have a lack of understanding about the concept and QAPs. It is believed that if the staff responsible for QA cannot understand QA concepts and requirements clearly, they cannot help the university's stakeholders to participate effectively. Presumably the problem is not with institutional policies and decisions because the majority of respondents (n=199, 66.1%, R3) believed they support the participation of academics in QA. However, the problem seems to be that QA might be not one of high priorities of university management, or that the management has insufficiently qualified staff to manage QA operation. Therefore, the stakeholders believe that the management does not provide enough support to create a regulatory environment and the required financial, human and technological resources to support QA operation. These results match those observed in an earlier study by Horine and Hailey (1995), who found that in 46 of 160 HEIs, the lack of senior management support and commitment was one of the major challenges to successful quality management practices. Jones et al. (1993) concluded that the clear support and commitment of management to the goals of QA it wishes to achieve could be a crucial factor in stakeholders' responses to the program, which can lead to enhancement in quality practice.

Another reason behind the failure from the participants' perspectives is that there is no clear consensus between the senior management and the stakeholders about the concepts of QA and its requirements. The results indicate that this is due to the approach to change that

the management followed in order to replace the quality procedures in the university. From the first introduction of QA in the university, the management enforced the application of new QAPs, without giving sufficient time to establish a widespread QA culture among the sectors and stakeholders, due to the aim of obtaining institutional accreditation urgently. A participant of the survey commented, *"The university management did not explain to staff what QA is; QAPs was applied directly."* It seems that this major, systematic change may not have started in the right way, as the data showed. The university vision, objectives and mechanisms of the QA project remain ambiguous. This may lead to conflicts between the senior management and stakeholders, plus the emergence of resistance, even from individuals in managerial levels. Watty (2003) suggested that:

> *... where conceptions of quality differ between the role's senders (government, quality agencies, universities) and the role receiver/focal person (academics), there is potential for conflict, particularly where the value-laden notion of quality in HE is at the heart of the conflict. Clearly, a number of factors or variables (organisational, personal and interpersonal) will determine the nature and extent of this potential conflict.* (p. 219).

Another management challenge is the composition of the deanships, offices and committees responsible for QA operation, primarily made up of directors and staff, and the distribution of powers and roles between them. The data indicate that staff at high levels who are involved in QA often moved roles not long after they have been assigned, before having enough time to implement their plans or achieve some of the goals. This leads to instability of workflow, because it is common practice that a new administrator is going to make a new plan with a new team. As for the distribution of powers and roles between the individuals, this is one of the main dilemmas facing stakeholders in the operation. The study revealed that there is insufficient trust in staff, who are not given adequate power to complete their work – largely because there are no standards or clear principles for the selection of individuals for QA operation roles. In addition, the individuals responsible for QA do not have enough freedom to creatively spread the culture of QA, or to improve operating procedures. A possible explanation for this, as the results suggested, might be that the management follows autocratic and centralised approaches, which may limit granting trust to more individuals, empowerment and delegation. The results from the qualitative data mirror those of the questionnaire data, wherein stakeholders' participation in the university in terms of policy formulation, planning, process evaluation and decision-

making, are limited and not for everyone. These autocratic and centralised approaches can be found in many Saudi universities, as Hakami (2012) has identified.

Consistent with Hofstede's Power Distance Index (Hofstede, 2009), this might be due to a cultural orientation in the Arab world, where the Power Distance Culture is very high (80 of 120). This means that people accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. These are cultures in which the power relations are autocratic and where there is centralised authority. People are dependent on the power holder. This could result in staff not taking their own initiative, but rather waiting for the person in charge to provide them with instructions. In this situation there is little real empowerment (Hofstede, 2009, Smit, 2012).

The reality of communication between the managerial levels and stakeholders can also be considered a management challenge. The results showed that the bureaucratic management of work procedures negatively affects the communication between all stakeholders, thus leading to a slower work pace. This rather intriguing finding may be related to the position of the deanship of Development and QA in the institutional hierarchy and the powers its staff have. This study revealed that the deanship has limited authority to follow up and monitor the QAPs, communicate effectively within the university sectors and cannot contact the stakeholders directly. For example, one of the stakeholders explains how communication take a place in any QAPs:

"The Deanship of Development and QA deanship cannot contact faculty members directly. They have to contact the college's dean first, then they will contact their deputy of QA, then the deputy will contact the department director, then the director will contact the faculty, and then the response returns in the same way!" (Interview; Respondent: QA10; Female).

The examples above show how bureaucracy hinders communication and how difficult it is for stakeholders to contact the staff responsible for QA to ask for support when facing challenges. This may lead to delays in the operation, or the disengagement of stakeholders' interest, or the performance of procedures without verification of the validity of the procedures. This of course makes the results unreliable.

The weakness in communication becomes a major challenge, for example, in the communication between QA women's offices and men's offices, as described by one of the

experts: *"There is a disconnect between the QA offices in the men's sections and women's sections, regarding the operation of QAP. This leads to poor follow-up of operations and delay in achievements,"* (Focus group; Respondent: QA7; Female). Interestingly, the results of the questionnaire's data found a statistical difference in engagement in QA operation based on stakeholders' gender – i.e. significantly higher engagement for males. This finding is contrary to previous studies, which have suggested that women are more committed to involvement in QA practices (Luke, 1997, Morley, 2005, Cardoso et al., 2013). This is does not appear to be the case in this study. A possible explanation for this finding may attributed to the poor communication between male and female sections in managing QA and the lack of adequate powers within female sections.

9.3.4 Stakeholders' Challenges

The study revealed that the stakeholders' understanding and awareness of the concepts of QA, the qualifications and skills that they have, all affect the level of their engagement in the operation of QA. In this regard, the results pointed to several issues. There is a broad view that the stakeholders have a superficial understanding and a lack of a sufficient awareness of QA concepts and its procedures at all levels in the institution. The data suggests that this is due to the approach followed by the university in an attempt to change the quality system and introduce a new one with too much focus on the pursuit of institutional accreditation and not on the QA itself. This also resulted in a widespread sense of frustration among the stakeholders after the university failed to achieve the accreditation by the planned deadline. It may not be the only reason for the ambiguity of the concepts and procedures for QA among stakeholders, but there are certain indications that this ambiguity is a challenge to the establishment of effective participation in the operation of QA.

On the other hand, the study revealed that there are a limited number of people qualified to participate in the operation of QA. This means that a large number of stakeholders may be carrying out the procedures according to their personal views and limited understanding. This factor becomes even more critical when the few qualified staff leave the university – most of them non-Saudis – and without a suitable Saudi replacement. The results indicated there was a statistically significant difference between Saudi and non-Saudi stakeholders' engagement in QA operation and the engagement was significantly greater for non-Saudis. This could lead to two challenges. Firstly, finding new qualified staff to hold the positions of the departing staff. Secondly, the low number of qualified Saudi individuals who are

trusted by the senior management. And, because they are trusted they are already busy with administrative positions and commitments, therefore precluding them from taking on more responsibility for QA. As one of the questionnaire responders emphasised, *"I cannot carry out QA tasks … I have tight time constraints with many management commitments and a heavy teaching load, in addition to research work."* In Horine and Hailey's (1995) study, time was identified as one of the greatest challenges at HEIs. The main concern was the difficulty for overloaded staff to accept the additional work of quality practices. Horine and Hailey (1995) argued that lack of flexibility towards time was *"*linked to integrating quality management into the strategic plans of the organisation. To allocate sufficient time for quality practices, quality management must be valued as a priority by employees*,"* (p. 14).

The quantitative results indicate that the majority of participants (n=256, 85%, R1) agreed that QAPs are part of their duty. However, from the qualitative results, the most prominent challenges experienced by stakeholders is the presence of great resistance to the change in the work system and the application of QA, at all levels of the university. It was unexpected to discover that a great number of stakeholders believe QAPs to be a part of their daily work, yet a large number of them resist it. In this case, a possible explanation for the discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative results could be attributed to miscommunication, misunderstanding, or a kind of organisational conflict between stakeholders, as the source of quantitative data were faculty members whereas the qualitative data sources were administrative and QA members and experts.

The current study revealed various potential reasons of stakeholders' resistance. There are some seniors stakeholders who believe that they need to gain new knowledge and learn new skills to accomplish QA requirements; there are those who believe there is no need to change the usual mechanisms of measuring quality of work; there are those who do not want to, and do not have a desire or willingness for, any kind of change at all; there are those who believe this is additional work and not a part of academic work; and finally there are those who believe that the procedures pose a threat to the privacy of faculty members, through the inspection and control of their performance, and a threat to the privacy of students by accessing their marks and progress. These findings support similar findings in previous studies. Horine and Hailey (1995) found that skepticism and resistance of stakeholders appeared to be the one of the critical challenges to implementing quality improvement within HEIs. This is also consistent with the findings of Cheng's (2009)

study, where academics believed they should be able to independently audit and evaluate their own academic work. The procedures of external auditors are perceived as an unacceptable attack on the academic's job. This perception of QA procedures as a threat to the stakeholders' workstyle is also evident in Salter and Tapper (2000), Anderson (2006), Gallagher (2014), Meek (2002) and Hoecht (2006). In these studies it is clear that staff mostly perceived QA as a tool of management control and an infringement on their professional independence and freedom; it made them feel like they were being treated like employees, rather than independent professionals.

There are several possible explanations for this, as the elite groups suggested. The resistance could be due to the lack of stakeholders' awareness of QA, a lack of understanding of the procedures and requirements, the existence of many procedures that need a long time to accomplish, a lack of available incentives, and, lastly, the academic and administrative workload.

What is surprising is that while stakeholders at managerial levels described the participation of faculty members in the QA operation as a weakness, faculty members described the opportunities to participate in the university as limited in many areas. For example, decision-making opportunities are limited, and power and positions are granted to a small number of individuals, trusted by senior management without regard to their qualifications. These challenges make it difficult for faculty members to get a fair opportunity to participate. As one of the survey participants stated: *"Working on QAP is limited for some people; there is not enough trust in all faculties … and no chance for everyone to contribute in QAP."* This result can be linked to management challenges and could be an interesting discovery attributed to the existence of organisational conflict, where the senior management requires faculty members to apply QAPs without giving them opportunities in the planning, development and evaluation processes, or to make decisions. The results indicate that this has led faculty members to feel frustrated because the management ignore their views and qualifications, and furthermore causes a loss of enthusiasm to participate as one of the questionnaire participants hinted: *"The university management and the QA authorities do not make use of feedback that we provide, or that students provide. Our suggestions to improve QAP are usually ignored."*

One of the stakeholders' challenges that appeared repeatedly in the data is the workload. A large number of stakeholders complain of the size of academic and administrative work.

The impact of the workload on the participation of individuals in the operation of QA varies depending on their positions and commitments. For example, a manager of a QA committee said:

> *"It is difficult to do QAP requirements when you have a lot of managerial tasks. Maybe some administrators do QAP requirements, but they will do it quickly and will make many errors. The department asks us to do work ... the senior management ask us to do more work and attend many meetings ... and we have our academic load on top of this ... it is difficult to manage all that,"* (Interview; Respondent: QA15; Male).

It is not just those at a managerial level who complain about the burden of workload, even general faculty members do. For example, as one QA member outlined: *"The time of faculty members is divided between many roles: academic workload, committees, councils, research … in this case, faculty members cannot achieve quality standards*," (Interview; Respondent: QA14; Male).

The stakeholders' complaints about the increasing volume of workload following the implementation of QA practices was considered a serious issue in several previous studies (Newton, 1999, Drendri and Hook, 2007, Fourie and Alt, 2000, Alshahri, 2014), which discussed the responses of academic staff to the new system, and how that required them to practice new roles that could distract their attention from teaching and research.

Le Grange (2014) argues that QAP may lead to several conflicts among staff as it mostly focuses on audit and judgment. This argument has proved to be one of unanticipated findings in this study, in that the relationship among stakeholders and the cultural practices followed in the institution somewhat limit the extent of participation. The current study found that to avoid personal conflicts, some QA staff might not use their powers in monitoring, following up, evaluation and assessment of operation performance. One of the QA staff explained that:

> *"Unfortunately, there is no clear line between work and interpersonal relationships… This is a common issue in the culture of the institution. As a result, the staff of QA offices do not use all their powers to follow up or auditing QAP, in order to avoid personal conflicts,"* (Interview; Respondent: QA2; Male).

9.3.5 QAP Challenges

The study revealed that QAPs are not undertaken in a consistent manner in all university sectors. It is proceeding reasonably in a few sectors, slowly in some sectors and semi-stalled in others. This study revealed that there are challenges regarding the manner of administrative work in the institution and this affects in variety of ways the participation of stakeholders in QA. The management culture at the university is still traditional and in this regard, an expert of QA explained, *"The process is moving slowly toward the application of QA standards. The reason is we are still dealing with work in a traditional style,"* (Interview; Respondent: E16; Female).

The great number of QAPs, in addition, was emphasised as another challenge to effective participation. The results indicated that the procedures and requirements of QA need a long time and great continuous efforts to accomplish manually. Nearly two thirds of the respondents to the questionnaire (n=200, 66.5%, R2; n=197, 65.4%, R4) agreed that QAPs lead to increased working hours without sufficient financial incentives. Taking part in QAPs requires completing difficult skills and developing lots of new knowledge. There is a wide belief that QA implementation is increasing the bureaucratic procedures. This is not unexpected, as it has been indicated in other studies where academics see quality practices creating a heavy workload (Newton, 1999, Anderson, 2006, Carr et al., 2005, Cheng, 2009, Cheng, 2011, Alshahri, 2014). For example, these results reflect those of Alshahri (2014), who found that 461 academic staff of 889 in HEIs believe the QAPs are not leading to smooth daily implementation of documenting and measurement. Cheng (2009) also found that some academics believed some quality mechanisms – such as the extra paperwork generated – consume time. Academics do not receive compensation for the money spent in preparing for it or for the heavy administrative loads they cause.

It seems that the large number of procedures and requirements involved may lead stakeholders to avoid participation as far as they can. The elite groups emphasised the importance of reforming the traditional approach of management procedures and using e-management applications. One management stakeholder commented, *"It is difficult to achieve QA standards in the prevailing academic culture ... the number of students and the proportion of students to academic staff is one of the dilemmas."* (Interview; Respondent: M11; Male). This illustrates how difficult it is to achieve QA standards in the traditional academic environment, where there are large numbers of students and a low number of

qualified faculty members. These issues are, in themselves, considered by stakeholders as obstacles to the achievement of QA standards. In this case, this study revealed that there are demands by stakeholders for the senior management to reconsider admission policies and seek to attract more qualified faculty members to work at the university, as they believe it would be impossible to reach an acceptable level of achievement in its current state.

In addition, the study found that the approach of information management limits accessibility to information, which is a vital aspect of QA operation. The elite groups believe that this because there is no e-system support in managing, moving and evaluating the QA information, and secondly, that this is due to bureaucratic procedures that require many permissions to access the required data. This finding concurs with Alshahri (2014) study, which found that the lack of a proper system of QA information distribution made the process difficult to follow. Abdul-Jabbar (2012) outlined the lack of an e-system for managing QA data as one of the major concerns facing QA in Saudi universities. It seems that this probably places the stakeholders in a large spiral of administrative procedures that make them feel bored and frustrated and decreases their desire to participate. Moreover, the study found that long bureaucratic procedures could affect even the establishment of QA offices and the composition its staff. One participant of the questionnaire commented that,*"Bureaucracy is a serious challenge. For example, there is a long process for reforming QA office committees and for distributing roles."*

Another challenge emphasised by a large number of stakeholders, as previously noted, is the lack of a practical manual that explains, clearly and in detail, the QAP and its requirements. For example, the result suggests that the QA offices do not have a clear vision and the staff do not have a thorough job description to tell them what they need to accomplish. A number of participants in this study confirmed that the lack of a clear manual makes most procedures proceed according to personal views, which leads to many mistakes in the input of data and thus adversely affects the results. This finding is in agreement with those obtained by Alshahri (2014), who discovered that the lack of a blueprint or a manual made QAPs unclear and difficult to implement.

The language used to fill in quality forms is another challenge confronting stakeholders in QA operations. Most of the stakeholders in the university speak in Arabic only, while they are prompted to fill in the forms using English. The study found that the university did not provide solutions to this dilemma, such as providing professional staff to translate these

forms. This forces those who cannot write in English to write reports in poorly constructed English that cannot be relied upon in the assessment report.

One unexpected finding was the lack of analysis and evaluation mechanisms for the whole of the QA operation. The elite groups believe that this makes stakeholders guess whether they are following the right path or not. Therefore, there is an urgent demand for ongoing studies of operation status and development, such as the current study. As an external QA expert outlined:

> *"There is a lack of neutral systematic studies to analyse and identify weaknesses in the QAP. We need to conduct studies to help us to analyse the reality of practice and to plan for the future – studies like this one."* (Focus group; Respondent: E17; Female).

9.3.6 Staff Development Challenges

There is a common view among stakeholders that the training programs and workshops help in enhancing the participation in the operation of QA, but at the same time, there are some challenges that prevent people obtaining the full benefit of these programs. The study revealed that there are few training programs relating to the operation of QA. The data from the questionnaire indicated that (n=88, 29.02%, R9) of the respondents were uncertain about the availability of sufficient training programs to develop skills for practicing QAPs and (n=97, 32.2%, R9) disagreed with this. Interestingly, despite the fact that stakeholders complain about the lack of programs, the number of individuals attending the programs that are available, is small. The weakness of stakeholders' desire to attend development programs was also identified by Al-Hakim (2012). He attributed this to the behaviour of the management of some universities where they were not keen to take academics away from their established daily work in order to send them to attend training programs.

Several factors can be derived from these results and explain this observation. Firstly, data suggested that there is a lack of conviction amongst a large proportion of the stakeholders of the importance of QA and its role in changing the academic environment for the better, and therefore they are not keen to attend. Secondly, the available training programs and workshops provide the stakeholders with theoretical and superficial information about QA, rather than providing in-depth training on the procedures and forms of QA. It is possible

that this even leads some stakeholders to avoid participation because they do not have sufficient understanding and knowledge.

In addition, the study revealed some criticisms related to staff development programs for QA. Some suggest that training opportunities are only granted to individuals in administrative levels and are not available to all stakeholders equally. Some important programs are offered only in English, and this deprives the majority of stakeholders, who speak Arabic, of the opportunity to benefit from those programs. Also, the program quality is not of a sufficient level to provide a full explanation of the concepts of QA and its procedures. The number of professional trainers is limited. Announcements of details of training programs and workshops do not reach all stakeholders and are sometimes delayed. There is no mechanism to review the quality of the programs held to make sure they are actually useful to individuals. Finally, the times when the programs are held often do not fit with the schedules of a large number of stakeholders, especially those who have large academic and administrative burdens. In relation to this, data from the questionnaire indicated that (n=91, 30.02%, R8) of the respondents were uncertain whether the training programs and workshops about QA are held at appropriate times and (n=92, 30.5% R8) believed they are not.

The challenge of staff development in relation to QA supports earlier findings. Drendri and Hook (2007) study investigated QAPs in Saudi universities and identified several weakness of staff development in relation to QA development, such as the language of the programs (English), the means of delivering information, the ambiguity of terms and the lack for accessible sources for more information. Horine and Hailey (1995) emphasised the need for ongoing training, with suitable times, for everyone, focusing on "education and basic understanding of the philosophy" and methods for *"*spreading the interest and enthusiasm across campus for continuous quality improvement,*"* (p. 15).

9.3.7 Incentives Challenges

The study revealed that the availability of moral and financial incentives is seen as a catalyst for stakeholders to put more effort in the operation of QA. Notwithstanding, only less than half of the questionnaire sample (n=134, 44.5%, R7) believed *the university encourages academics to participate in QA sufficiently, financially and morally*, whereas (n=73, 24.3%) were uncertain and (n=94, 31%) disagreed. As the results of the interviews suggest, this has become a major challenge for the university, where a large proportion of

stakeholders perceive the participation in the operation of QA as extra work and the university has to pay extra to those who work on it. Some participants indicated the existence of a system of incentives since the start of the QA project was adequate. This was contradicted however by the emergence of widespread criticism of the system. Some participants felt that financial incentives were only granted to individuals in managerial positions, or to those serving on committees and in offices of QA. Moreover, some of the staff at QA offices complained of a lack of incentives and a delay in the distribution. Thus the team felt frustrated by this. It seems that this situation creates a level of mistrust between the faculty and the university management, encouraging individuals to avoid participation in QA. It is possible that these results are due to what was called by one of the experts as 'a big mistake', – a viewpoint that seems to refer to making staff work solely for money. He commented that, *"Unfortunately, members are accustomed to completing these tasks for financial incentives; therefore, when the incentives stopped, they stopped working hard,"* (Focus group; Respondent: E25; Male).

9.3.8 External Challenges

At the end of 2012, a formal press report lauded the success of two Saudi governmental universities in obtaining the institutional accreditation of 25 public universities (Alarabiya.net, 2012). At the end of 2016, an official report by NCAAA pointed out that the number of universities that have received institutional accreditation had only increased to five (NCAAA, 2016).

This study has revealed that there are some challenges that might hinder the Saudi universities from achieving satisfied achievements of QA and might decrease the participation of stakeholders. There are some criticisms of NCAAA – The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment – for the limited support they provide to the universities. A stakeholder of QA claimed that:
"There is no real support and follow up from NCAAA for QA and accreditation operations in KSA universities, so the universities have not achieved what they want, so far," (Focus group; Respondent: QA15; Male).

Furthermore, the NCAAA requires all Saudi universities to apply a unified QA and accreditation system, without taking into consideration each university's circumstances and resources. This creates something of a challenge for the universities, especially those who are still engaged in the first steps of QAPs, with a limited number of experts and qualified

staff. This finding concurs with Darandari et al.'s (2009) argument that Saudi universities' administration, structure and sizes do not comply with the culture of quality. This case is not only identified in Saudi universities but also in the academic institutions of most Arab countries, where several challenges in the operation of QA can be identified for several reasons – such as the lack of resources, leadership that supports participation and the inability of some staff to use technology to accomplish work duties (Mansouri, 2012). Thus, Drendri and Hook (2007) concluded that the universities should adopt quality models that are more suitable for their specific circumstances in order to overcome the barriers of regulations and the lack of qualified staff.

This current study also found that there is a prevailing view among a large number of stakeholders that QA and its standards do not conform to institutional culture or local values; therefore, it is necessary to reformulate it to become more convenient. Otherwise, it will be difficult to involve people in participation. One of the questionnaire participants pointed out, *"It is urgent to reform the QA system and its standards to be more suitable for Arabic culture, otherwise it would be difficult to convince people to participate in the operation of QA."* This finding supports the argument of Amin et al. (2005), who suggested that copying quality systems from developed countries and applying them to developing countries without considering the culture and circumstances could lead to critical challenges or failure.

However, the most interesting finding was the potential influence of religion on encouraging stakeholders to become involved in the QAP. One of the questionnaire's participants explained that, *"Promoting religious values among individuals will increase their commitment to QA work, and make them work harder to achieve high quality performance, especially since the Islamic religion emphasises the importance of those values."* This result may be explained by the fact that most of the people in the university institution are Muslims, and as Islam supports the idea of work quality and perfection, it can be a significant factor in convincing the stakeholders to participate with QA. This may also be present in other religions and cultures. As Hambler (2015) argues:

> Religious employees, particularly those sufficiently committed to their beliefs that they want to manifest them overtly at work, are, or ought to be, amongst the most committed or 'virtuous' employees, as they are working not simply for their managers but also for God. (p. 18).

Q3 In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

9.3.9 The Importance of E-Management and its Potential Use in the QA Operation

Many interesting issues rose in the results regarding the importance of e-management and its potential use in the operation of QA. There is partial agreement among the participants that the university has access to a high level of technology and that there are a large number of e-management services in a number of sectors for a variety of purposes, such as admissions, documentation, statistical data, and e-learning. Regarding the extent of the spread of the concept of e-management in the university work environment, the study revealed that stakeholders have a superficial understanding of e-management and its applications. For example, stakeholders believed that it is instrumental in helping to convert work tasks from a manual to an electronic process, by providing the advantage of the technological revolution to facilitate administrative procedures.

Nevertheless, there is some criticism and controversy over the lack of access to these services for the purpose of QA operation. Data indicate a lack of coordination and cooperation between university sectors that run those applications and the Deanship of Development and QA – resulting in the situation that QA staff do not take advantage of the facilities offered by e-services. In addition, stakeholders demanded more e-services that help facilitate communication and management of transactions between individuals and university sectors. Miscommunication seems to be a critical challenge within the university, as it was mentioned several times in many earlier cases with regards to running daily work activities, especially in relation to QA.

This study revealed that the current relationship between QA operation and e-management is limited or unclear. Only one e-service is used in the QA operations, and then only in a limited way, for the assessment of academic programs and faculty members. Some newly established colleges have limited initiatives that might be expanded and used in future to enhance the operation of QA. For example, with the lack of support for such initiatives, one of the newly established colleges has designed a basic system to follow stakeholders' achievement of QA requirements. This system offers the basic services: a checklist system, a quality server and an e-documentation system (see chapter 7.3.6.1).

The most important question remains what the potential of e-management in QA operation is. The findings of this study indicate that there is a widespread belief that the use of technology has become a new trend in managing education institutions. It is worth mentioning that the majority of stakeholders emphasise the importance of the role that e-management can play in making a significant positive change in the operation of QA. For example, a member of QA said: *"E-management is an international trend and I think the university is delayed in reaping its benefits, compared to other universities,"* (Interview; respondent: QA19; Male).

The results from the questionnaire indicated that over two thirds of the people surveyed have positive perceptions and attitudes toward the potential of e-management in enhancing QA and that there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to apply it in practice. This result supports the conclusion of Kandel et al. (2010), who suggested that constructing a system for managing QA is needed to ensure quality is being maintained and enhanced.

The participants in this study argued that e-management can provide radical solutions to a number of problems, such as those associated with data accessibility, monitoring the operation of QA, speeding up achievement and maintaining what has been achieved. Some of these results mirror those of previous studies that have examined the expected contributions of e-management applications in QA operations (McLean, 2003, Kefalas et al., 2003, Salmi, 2006, Amara and Buaichh, 2010, Kandel et al., 2010, Ashour and Shqran, 2010, Kahveci et al., 2012).

To be precise, the potential benefits of e-management in the operation of QA based on the stakeholders' perspectives can be illustrated and summarised in the following table (9.1).

Administration
1. Distribute tasks and roles fairly. 2. Improve and speed up the decision-making process at QA managerial levels. 3. Facilitate the communication and transactions between institution sectors and between sectors and stakeholders. 4. E-management reduces bureaucracy and contributes to restructuring QAP to become more effective.
Operation
5. Facilitate the writing up of the required forms. 6. Improve workflow and transmission transactions between stakeholders. 7. Enhance transparency in the work. 8. Reduce toner and paper consumption. 9. Complete the work at any time, in less time, with greater accuracy and more security for data. 10. E-management supports the continuity and efficiency of QAP operations
Information management
11. Speed up communication between stakeholders to exchange information and experiences. 12. Facilitate access to information and statistics to make the right decisions. 13. Facilitate the documentation and data archiving process. 14. Provide a database of all stakeholders' qualifications, performance, improvements and achievements to get most out of the human resources.
Control and evaluation
15. Monitor the performance of QA offices and discover their strengths and weaknesses. 16. Periodically facilitate a review and improve the operations.
Encouragement and support
17. Encourage stakeholders to engage in QA as e-management is appropriate to the modern way of life, especially for those who do not want to fill out forms manually. 18. Provide direct and fast support for stakeholders when face any problems during QA operations.

Table 9. 1 The potential of e-management in QA operation according to stakeholders' perspectives

It was unexpected that the stakeholders had all these positive perceptions about the potential of e-management in QA operations. In addition, these results can be considered a good indication of stakeholders' willingness to use e-management applications, as well as

an indication that the stakeholders might have experienced the benefits of some e-management applications for different purposes at the institution. They therefore display positive perceptions toward the role that e-management could play in managing QA operation.

Despite all these potential benefits, the study revealed that there are a number of potential challenges that require careful consideration before institutions can take full advantage of the potential of e-management in the operation of QA. These challenges may relate to management aspects, stakeholders and technical issues.

9.3.10 Potential Challenges of Applying E-Management in QA Operation

Several studies indicated that developing countries face many challenges in the implementation of e-management in HE. These challenges can be related to the lack of effective approaches, a lack of qualified individuals or suitable technical infrastructure (AlHabib, 1991, Bashri, 2009, Vassilakis et al., 2005, Halabi, 2004, Dey and Sobhan, 2007).

Selvaratnam (2004) and Al-Tamam (2007) argue that e-management implementation requires a convinced and effective leadership who are highly aware of its importance. In this study, data indicate that the most critical challenge that could face the use of e-management in the operation of QA is when the senior management are unconvinced. There is a strong belief that leaders and decision-makers have the power to pass a decision requiring all stakeholders to apply any project that contributes to the development of work. Moreover, they have the power to provide sufficient financial and human support to ensure the success of the project. The presence of resistance to take advantage of e-management in the operation of QA in the senior management, may obstruct its implementation. Results indicated that there are a number of reasons behind potential resistance. Some stakeholders perceived the change as a threat; that it might limit their power, monitoring their performance and driving them to deliver the work quickly. In addition, the work of the e-management mechanism may collide with the bureaucratic approach that individuals are accustomed to following to accomplish tasks. Vassilakis et al. (2005) linked these attitudes to the issues of a shift in power and fear of losing positions.

A second management challenge is the extent of the effectiveness of the current university administrative structure. Only half of the participants in the questionnaire (n=151, 50.2%,

R3) believed that the university administrative structure is suitable for using e-management applications for QA operations. The qualitative results emphasised that the faculties and departments have a lack of good communication, coordination and cooperation. This is not consistent with the principles of e-management. In this case, participants emphasised the need to review the structure of the university and activate communication between all sectors to implement an integrated work style, based on the exchange of information, expertise and services, in order to ensure its suitability for the application of e-management in QA operations. These results support the recommendation of Al-Omiri (2008) who has studied the requirements of applying e-management in Saudi universities and who suggests that the success of e-management depends on the availability of integrated infrastructure and connecting all sectors and departments through networks.

Several potential challenges arose from the results in terms of stakeholders' participation in any new e-system to operate QA. One of those challenges is the lack of the current management team's ability to manage the new system, especially in light of already being under many academic and administrative work pressures. In addition, there is an urgent need for qualified staff in all sectors of the university to work on the upcoming system. This result concurs with those of Al-Omiri (2008), in that Saudi universities only have few experts in e-management implementation. I believe this finding outlines the urgent need to establish staff development programs to prepare individuals through good rehabilitation and training programs, especially older stakeholders, or those who have never worked on similar systems. The lack of qualified people in the field of e-management at the university could even affect the design of the system. The result indicated a good design requires the presence of individuals who have sufficient abilities and knowledge to determine the services and features that should be delivered by the system to enhance the operation of QA.

One interesting detail is the possibility of the emergence of some resistance to the use of e-management to operate QA. The study revealed several areas potentially causing resistance. There are some individuals who do not have the confidence to use technology in the completion of work tasks. There are some stakeholders who are worried about the ability of the e-management applications to monitor their performance and discover their mistakes, and this anxiety may prompt them to complete the work too quickly and threaten their prestige. There are those who believe the university does not offer appropriate training programs to prepare the stakeholders for taking advantage of e-management

applications in QA operations. Finally, there are some stakeholders who believe that e-management applications violate their privacy and the privacy of their students, allowing what they see as confidential data to be shared with other parties. The literature stresses the importance of full stakeholders' engagement in ensuring the successful implementation of e-management. However, the lack of user readiness could lead to what may be called ‘culture shock’ as e-management makes radical changes in all the institution's components (Lam, 2005, Vassilakis et al., 2005, Ebrahim and Irani, 2005).

Elite groups proposing to prepare for any disturbance or resistance that may occur due to the use of e-management, hope to mediate it through the establishment of training programs and workshops to prepare stakeholders for the new system, and later the provision of ongoing support after the launch of the system. In addition, around two thirds of participants in the questionnaire (n=221, 73.5%, R1) perceived incentives, both financially and morally, as the most important key to encouraging stakeholders using e-management applications in the operation of QA. In accordance with the present results, Al-Omiri (2008) identified that offering training programmes and workshops for all employees of the university and motivating them to attend, along with establishing a system of incentives to motivate distinguished staff in the use of e-applications, are important requirements in the transition to e-management at Saudi universities.

Ndou (2004) suggest that before starting to use e-management it is important to assess the e-readiness of an institution, in order to be aware of their circumstances and available resources. The current study revealed that there is a wide agreement that the university is an advanced electronic environment that stimulates the use of e-management applications and managing QAP electronically will not require expensive new equipment or systems, depending what is already available. However, the provision of an adequate system for the management of operations in line with the needs and culture of the regulatory environment in the university could cause critical potential technical challenges. The participants suggested that this means that the university may prefer to build and design its own system, according to the available resources of human financial and technology. Thong (1999) supports the view that it would be difficult to apply the same e-management system in different institutions successfully. For this, Cameron and Green (2009) suggest that determining the expectations of e-management system is an important step as it helps senior management identify the requirements of development and attention to this must be given by all stakeholders in the institution. It seems that this may encourage some

stakeholders to raise the question of the extent the university will be able to build such a system in the presence of a number of challenges. According to the results of this study, these may include the sourcing and training of some experts in the fields of management, QA and computer programming; the need to determine the system objectives and operational requirements; the need to ensure that the system is flexible, amendable, and easy to learn and use. Moreover, the study found that designing an e-management system for QA might be become harder in line with the efforts of some colleges to get accreditation from international bodies for academic programs. Some stakeholders argue that it is necessary to have a system that not only complies with NCAAA standards in KSA, but at the same time should be designed in a way that works in concert with the QA and accreditation systems of other international bodies and agencies.

Regarding the language the system has to support, the study found that all the data in the colleges with theoretical disciplines are in Arabic, and most of the data in the colleges of scientific disciplines are in English. This means that the university management will be obliged to design an e-system to manage QA with both languages and offer professional translation to accomplish the procedures with high accuracy.

Information security was identified as a critical issue and should be considered carefully; it is a key stakeholder concern, as the results indicate. Due to this concern, a participant of the elite groups suggested that, *"We are supposed to make an electronic copy and a hard copy of our work, especially in the beginning stages of applying the new system, because we could face technical problems that may cause a big loss of information,"* (Focus group; Respondent: QA10; Female). These worries could be attributed to the inclusion of sensitive information about the performance of the organisation, of individuals and the personal information of all people belonging to the university including students, faculty members and administrators. It seems that it will require considerable efforts and a lot of money to provide adequate data protection. Qadori (2010) warns that leniency in protecting the data on the e-system may make stakeholders lose confidence and avoid participation.

At the end of this section, it worth mentioning that the stakeholders who participated in this study have made many suggestions and recommendations to tackle the challenges confronting them in the operation of QA (see chapter 7). Those proposals will be addressed

and synthesised into a framework that has a heuristic value to practitioners responsible for QA in Saudi Arabia's HIEs.

9.4 Part 3: A proposed framework to enhance the operation of QA in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education Sector: Educational Management and E-Management Perspectives

A key contribution of this study is to propose a hristic framework to enhance the operation of QA at Saudi HEIs. The framework's development is grounded in the literature and in the perspectives of stakeholders involved in actual operation of QA in a large HE institution. The building of the framework was undertaken with the intention of drawing attention to essential factors, challenges and drawbacks in the practice and operation of QA. The framework has sought to capture the issues that arose over the course of the study and proposes possible solutions to enhance practice and operations. The framework has benefited from contributions that have stemmed from the literature across three disciplines (Change, QA and e-management). Table 9.2 highlights the key issues, ideas and areas contributed by the literature in developing the framework. Thus, it is intended to serve as a guide and stimulus for educational policy and decision makers and academic leaders in Saudi HEIs, and for HEIs throughout the region. The framework identifies seven main areas with each one extending into several issues that stem from the findings of this study (see Figure 9.1):

1. Leadership
2. Stakeholders
3. Quality assurance process
4. Staff development
5. Rewards and incentives
6. E-Management
7. External factors

All the components identified in the framework are important for an effective and successful QA operation. The enumeration of the framework's elements (1-7) ranks the influential factors in QA operation that arose in this research. In Saudi HEIs, the results of this research suggest that the effective way would be starting the enhancement of QA operation by considering the critical issues in the first listed component of the proposed framework, the leadership. However, it is useful to note that the institution's conditions,

available resources and collective staff experience in QA could determine which component should be prioritised and requires more attention.

The philosophy of this framework stems from the reality of the operation of QA in Saudi Arabia, beginning with an examination of previous literature in the same field. Although the framework can be customised to serve any HEIs to enhance the operation of QA, it is more compatible for Saudi HEIs and the countries in the region that share the same circumstances and HE systems characteristics. In this context, the framework takes into account several factors, such as the issues of the vision and development plans, the management approaches, organisational structure, the qualifications and resources available, the organisation of the culture of the local community, stakeholders' characteristics, religion, language issues and the infrastructure of ICT.

1. Leadership

This research found that the leadership and those working in the managerial levels at universities play a significant role in making positive changes towards best practice in QA operation. This is because they have access to an overview of the institution and its needs in terms of human, financial and technological resources. It is the responsibility of the senior management to commit to establishing an organisational culture capable of responding to change, empowering staff plus providing appropriate and fair training opportunities to all. The management also bears full responsibility for building, reviewing and developing QAPs, and ensuring its suitability to the culture of the institution and its objectives (see section 3.6). It is suggested that the old **bureaucratic** approach must be excluded from the university community and replaced with modern managerial approaches that support change and development. This can help to speed up the administrative transactions within managerial levels to avoid delays in the QA operations, especially when applying e-management systems.

Adopting a new QA system requires consideration of the suitability of the institutional structure to ensure the effectivness of application. Although it depends on the readiness of the institution, full or partial **structural reform** are necessary to fit the new system. In a university hierarchy, the main QA office should be linked to the university president’s office. This would give more power and prestige to the QA office. In addition, the senior management must provide the main QA office with adequate authority to follow up and monitor stakeholders' participation and also contact academic departments directly. The main QA office should work as a

consulting and monitoring section and as a link between academic departments and managerial levels. This can ensure that faculty and QA staff make good use of the budget allocated to support the QA operations. Any structural reform should ensure that academic departments have sufficient authority to carry out QAPs, such as reviewing the description of curricula and the annual reports of academic staff.

Introducing a new system of QA is a critical issue, therefore, the senior management strike a balance between **persuasion and compulsion,** based on the culture of the institution and its circumstances. The senior management should adopt a friendly approach that helps convince staff that QA is a positive idea, by asserting, for example, QA benefits and that QA is not intended to identify mistakes, but to make improvements. This approach would help to increase the awareness of the importance of QA. It is also better to follow a friendly approach in solving problems and overcoming challenges, even if this takes more time. Convincing people in positive ways will make them engage in QA. The literature is rich in friendly change approaches and strategies to deal with different types of resistance. See: (Crosby, 2005, Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008, Cardoso et al., 2013, Le Grange, 2014). However, the senior management does not always have to convince reluctant participants, especially after the QA system has been adopted for some time. Staff must be obliged to do the required work, especially after adopting a clear framework that makes the concepts of QA clear and understandable to everyone.

QA Framework elements	Contributed literature in the QA framework
1. **Leadership**: Bureaucracy exclusion, Support Empowerment, Performance assessment, Open communication, Persuasion & compulsion, Plans, and deadlines, QA a priority, Structure reform, Transparency & credibility, Continues efforts	(Lewin, 1947, Deming, 1991, Kotter, 1995, Jick, 1999, Coetsee, 1999, Garvin, 2000, Kezar, 2001, Mento et al., 2002, Harris et al. 2003, Crosby, 2005, Sorensen et al., 2005, Newman, 2006, Longenecker et al., 2007, Harvey, 2007, Hellriegel & Slocum, 2010, Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008, Cameron & Green, 2009, Hiatt & Creasey, 2012, San and Kong, 2012, Cardoso et al., 2013, Le Grange, 2014, Scott, 2004)
2. **Stakeholders**: Awareness Understanding**,** Staff loyalty**,** Equality and equity**,** Expertise, Qualification, Engagement standards, Workload	(Bennett et al., 1992, Horine & Hailey, 1995, Carnall, 1999, Watty, 2003, Crosby, 2005, Amin et al., 2005, Newman, 2006, Olson, 2006, Carnall, 2007, Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008, Jani, 2011)
3. **QAP**: System stability, Bureaucracy exclusion, Multiple languages, Control system, Minimizing procedures, E-management, Detailed manual, Experience exchange, Information system	(Smyth & Van der Vegt, 1993, Brown, 2004, Harvey, 2007, Drendri & Hook, 2007, Sanyal and Martin, 2007, Reichert, 2008, Cameron & Green, 2009, Hashim et al., 2010, Qadori, 2010, Kettunen, 2012)
4. **Staff Development**: Sufficient programs, Equal opportunities, Required training, Professional training, Practical training, Encouragement, Arrangements, Distance learning, Continuity, Financial support	(Horine & Hailey, 1995, Carnall, 1999, Coetsee, 1999, Kezar and Eckel, 2002, Yorke, 2000, Harris et al., 2003, Oakland, 2003, Drendri and Hook, 2007, Darandari et al., 2009, Al-Hakim, 2012, Le Grange, 2014)
5. **Rewards & Incentives**: Equitable system, Non-monetary, Financial, On right time	(Lim, 1999, Coetsee, 1999, Sengupta et al., 2006, Kiritsis, 2009, Cameron & Green, 2009, Le Grange, 2014)
6. **E-Management**: Defining requirements, Usability, Infrastructure expansion, Development capability, Gradual application, Integration, Senior management, Staff development, Open communication, Financial support, Technical support	(Marquuardt and Kearsley, 1999, Kefalas et al., 2003, Selvaratnam, 2004, Ndou, 2004, Dey & Sobhan, 2007, Al-Tamam, 2007, Al-Omiri, 2008, Ashour & Shqran, 2010, Kandel et al., 2010, Amara and Buaichh, 2010, Yao et al., 2011, Abdul-Jabbar 2012, Kahveci et al. 2012)
7. **External factors**: Government support, Quality bodies support, Cultural and religion context	(Mok, 2000, Amin et al., 2005, Drendri & Hook, 2007, Lisec et al., 2008, Hassn, 2012, San and Kong, 2012, Mansouri, 2012, Aguirre & Alpern, 2014, Hambler, 2015)

Table 9.2 The key contributed literature in developing the QA framework

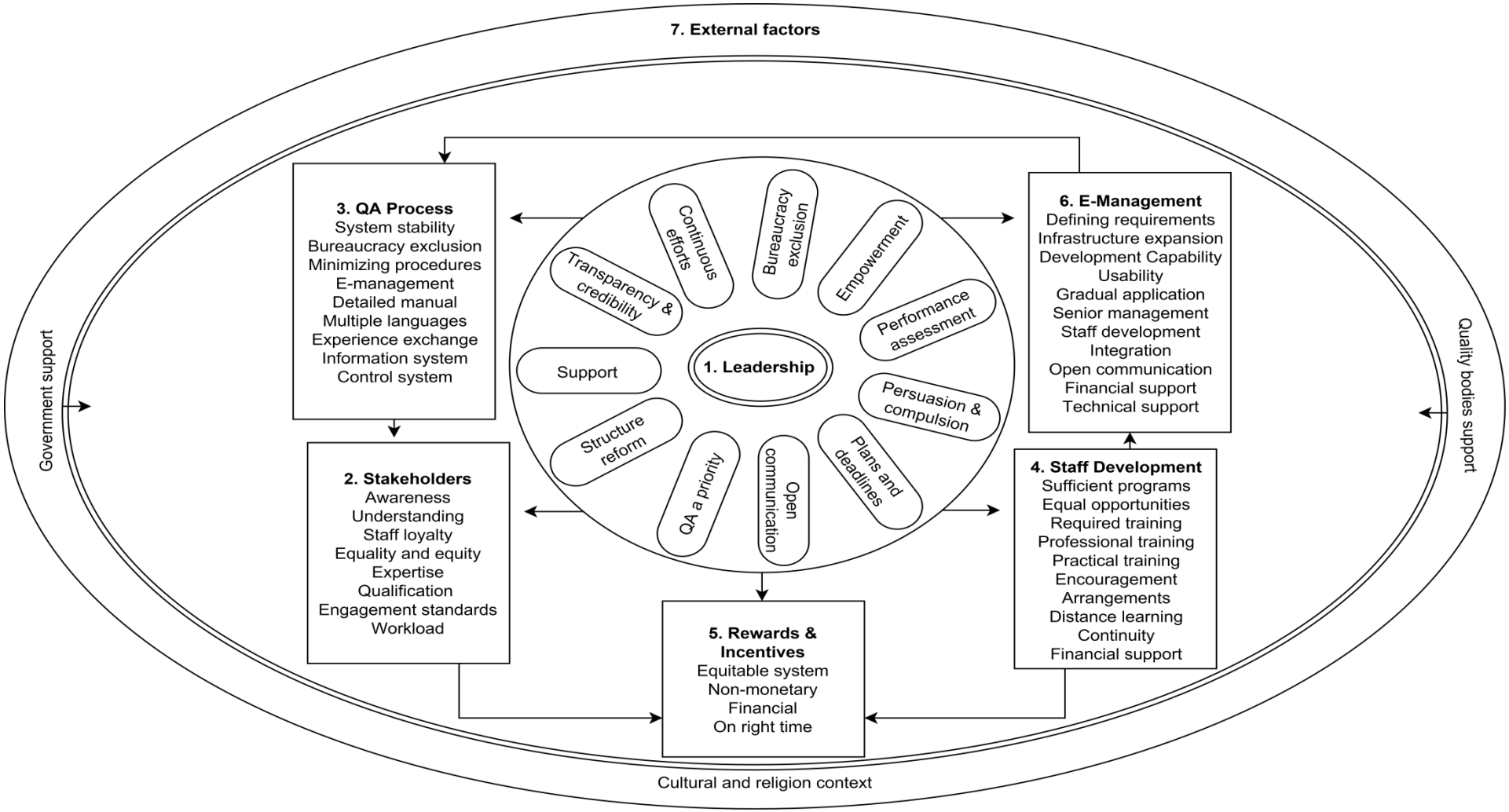

Figure 9. 1 A proposed framework to enhance the operation of QAP

It is very important that **QA is a priority** in the agenda of senior management. An effective and successful QA operation needs adequate understanding of the new system at a senior management level, full commitment and support for all aspects of the operation (Sorensen et al., 2005). It is necessary to spread the QA culture, not just as terminology, but also as something that can be achieved in reality. The senior management should promote the view that the QA project is not only the responsibility of the QA offices, but that everyone has a role and responsibility to make progress in the operation. This can be achieved by increasing the awareness, meaning and importance of QA in all its aspects, and encouraging management stakeholders to see QA as a priority in their work. This requires effective **open communication** between senior management and all sectors in the institution in order to tackle any issues. Senior management should support the creation and development of a network throughout the institution's sectors to share good practices and transfer experiences and knowledge among stakeholders; this will save time in dealing with problems that may emerge through QA operations. In addition, it is important that the senior management support communication between the sectors of the institution and other international institutions in the same specialisation to improve QA standards (San and Kong, 2012).

With regards to **empowerment** practice, the senior management must increase trust between QA staff and the rest of stakeholders by providing equal opportunities for all staff to participate in the formulation of the university's vision, strategic plan and the QAPs, as well as involving all stakeholders in discussions and decision-making about QA, and how to improve it. All managerial levels and individuals have to have a clear role in the QA project. It is also recommended that QA requirements become a part of the faculty academic load to ensure that requirements will be carried out. For this, the periodical **performanace assessment** must consider the efforts and achievements of all stakeholders in QA. This can be linked with career upgrades but this must, however, be applied with high transparency.

In order to increase stakeholders' engagement, the senior management must set efficient **plans and deadlines**. There is an urgent need for a clear plan and clear engagement guidelines. QAPs must be monitored accurately and deadlines to achieve each standard of QA must be set and announced. Senior management have to be resolute in their decisions about the implementation deadlines for each process or goal.

During operation, the role of senior management must be enhanced through the provision of sufficient **support**. Meetings, interviews and discussions with staff would lead to high-level acceptance among staff. In addition, the senior management has to ensure that all managerial levels have a clear understanding of the work required to support QA operation. The senior management should provide sufficient financial and technical information to help staff achieve QA goals. Faculty members need direct support and following up to accomplish QA requirements. Hence, it would be advantageous, for example, to form a qualified and experienced team to provide faculty with a hotline support.

Senior management must adhere to policies and procedures that help to provide accurate and reliable information with high **transparency and credibility** to the institution, its programs, its financial and human resources as well as to stakeholders within the institution and external bodies concerned with QA. The QAPs must be conducted based on high transparency and credibility. Regular meetings must be conducted to discuss operation issues and challenges with increasing participation in decision making. The results of QA should be presented, with high transparency, to staff and students.

It is important to highlight that the senior management's efforts must be **countinuous** in order to move the work towards optimisation. The senior management should continue improving the mechanisms of QAP, and ensure all stakeholders understand the concept and procedures of QA and their roles in the operation. This can be through staff development programs, discussions, visiting the QA offices periodically and running following-up processes in all sectors of the institution. The work has to continue even if there is a resistance to it. The culture of QA will spread and resistance will decrease.

2. Stakeholders

It is very important to continue increasing **awareness and understanding** of the QA concept and procedures among all stakeholders' groups, including students, and ensure that the QA is a part of the education process. Enhancing the culture of QA can be achieved through the distribution of publications on QA, procedures and expected results on a continuous basis. In addition, an investment in social networking

applications is recommended to spread the culture, to connect stakeholders with QA bodies and to provide them with information and knowledge (Amin et al., 2005).

Staff loyalty is an important component in enhancing stakeholders' engagement in QA. There are several means to instil a satisfactory level of loyalty in stakeholders: provide staff with more trust, respect, powers and control; provide staff with continuous training and support; promote the values of self-discipline and cultural or religious morals, which might lead individuals to work harder to achieve QA objectives. Furthermore, staff need to see that **equality and equity** principles at the institution are considered and respected. The institution has to make sure all stakeholders have equal engagement opportunities and an equitable rewards system is in place. Allow students and staff to have their voices heard in discussions and help make decisions on QA.

The institution must employ **experts** in the main QA office and QA offices in all the institution's sectors. They should have suffcient **qualifications** to provide adequate support and consultations when any department or stakeholder faces a problem in carrying out QA requirements. Preparation of experts must be continuous and stakeholders from the university who are interested in QA must be attracted, involved in a comprehensive training program on QA, then distributed within university departments.

One of the challenges that may face the stakeholders is the lack of understanding of procedures and what is expected of them to achieve QA objectives. For this, it is highly recommended to set **engagement standards** in a clear form. This will increase stakeholders' acceptance and may encourage them to work to a higher standard. Another challenge that hinders stakeholders' engagement is **workload**. The academic workload should be decreased to give stakeholders sufficient time to carry out QA work. In addition, employing more faculty members will help to open up more classes and decrease student numbers in each class; therefore, QA can be better applied. Otherwise, QA tasks ought to be counted as part of the academic workload. (See section 4.9).

3. Quality Assurance Process

It is important to make change and improve QA in a professional manner and not randomly. **System stability** is very important, so stakeholders do not get confused by

frequent new requirements in a short period of time, or lose engagement with changes, which might decrease their participation. In addition, QA staff in all positions should be given sufficient time to achieve reasonable objectives before they are replaced. However, some radical changes are always required to overcome challenges that confront the flow of operation. Stakeholders always complain about the large number of forms and following up on procedures. **Bureaucracy exclusion**, **minimising procedures** and applying **e-management** applications will enhance the efficiency of operation (Hashim et al., 2010, Qadori, 2010). It will increase the staff acceptance of QA, especially those who consider QA paperwork to be a heavy burden. It allows all staff to participate easily, offers access to required information at any time, and helps staff to follow up on procedures with less effort and time.

Offering a clear and **detailed manual** of QA will be helpful for all stakeholders, new or old. It will increase understanding of the procedures, reduce mistakes in filling in QA forms, help the QA office to evaluate the forms quickly and obtain more accurate results. It is also important to emphasise that QA manuals, forms and documents must be available in **multiple languages** for staff to be able to understand, apply and share information and advice. The institution should encourage **experience exchange** between all sectors to take advantage of experience in overcoming challenges and in the development of QA operation.

The QA operation must be supported by an accessible **information system** that offers all information required to accomplish QAPs. In addition, a **control system** must be established for monitoring the operation, following up QAPs and assessing stakeholders' performance (Sanyal and Martin, 2007).

4. Staff Development

Offering **sufficient training programs** is vital to ensure all faculty members receive training and fully understand the QAPs. Quality assurance staff must receive additional training to manage QA operation, as they are in a position to provide support to all staff. Moreover, it is important to develop comprehensive obligatory training programs, that target both new and old staff, to enhance their engagement and resolve problems in their performance. It is worth emphasising that there must be **equal opportunities** available for all staff to attend training and workshops.

It is important that all stakeholders attend **required training** related to their roles in QA. Enhancing communication between the main QA office in the institutions and stakeholders is essential in order to decide the type of training they need. Further, each department must check the training needs of their staff, then advise them to attend related programs. Specialised training programs must be provided to the individuals who manage QA. For example, they should be offered programs in improving team management skills and organisational change.

The institution has to offer **professional training** programs and workshops that suit all staff abilities and needs. Training must continue with a high level of quality, and attract well-qualified QA experts who understand the culture of the institution. It is important to offer **practical training** to help staff understand QA and fill in the forms step-by-step. Programs must be continually assessed, reviewed and evaluated to ensure that they cover all aspects of QA, and are suitable to achieve the needs of the institution and its stakeholders (Darandari et al., 2009).

Although staff may be aware of the importance of training on QA, this study revealed a lack of attendance for various reasons. Therefore, **encouragement** is necessary to motivate employees to attend, for instance, through adopting Excellence Awards, with one of the award requirements attending training on QA, linking training credits to the faculty upgrade system.

This study found that the **arrangements** of development programs could affect staff attendance. The training must be announced early to all targeted staff, held at a convenient place and at multiple times to suit staff circumstances. Using a **distance learning** system could offer a useful and practical way to train stakeholders on accomplishing QAPs and managing. The institution can build a training platform on the university website in multiple languages to offer online training programs that explain, theoretically and practically, the QA objectives and procedures in detail. This will provide staff with more flexibility and opportunities to train at a time suitable to them.

Training must **continue,** either through developing existing staff or by involving new staff. Therefore, it is essential to assert that **financial support** is required to conduct training programs and workshops to train leaders and faculty members within the

institution. In addition, unlimited financial support is also needed to attract international QA experts to work at the university.

5. Rewards and Incentives

Rewards and incentives can be used to encourage and motivate staff to perform their work effectively. In QA operation, an **equitable system** is required, particularly for the first stages of application. It is suggested that rewards and incentives should be linked to the tasks of QA. For routine QA work, rewards and incentives should be dispersed and then gradually stopped when individuals widely engage in the operation. **Financial** rewards and incentives can take different forms, such as upgrades, payment for accomplishing QA tasks, or per project, and more creative incentives such as the giving of holiday tickets. Notwithstanding, deserving individuals must be paid **on time** and immediately, to avoid any kind of frustration. Moreover, rewards and incentives can be **non-monetary**; they can be in many forms, such as giving trust and more powers, reducing academic load, honouring good performance, or sending a simple 'thank you' card. These types of encouragements should continue to enhance the culture of QA throughout the institution.

6. E-Management

E-management supports the principle of QA, which is based on transparency, using accurate evidence and explicit information. This study found that e-management applications could help institutions to obtain a clear vision of particular activities and identify its strengths and weaknesses in the operation of QA (See table 9.1). However, **defining requirements** is the first step that must be taken to identify the objectives of the new e-system and how this might help enhance operation (Kefalas et al., 2003, Kandel et al., 2010). In addition, it is expected that even if the institution has IT readiness, **infrastructure expansion** may be necessary because the new QA e-system will involve thousands of procedures and stakeholders (Al-Omiri, 2008).

Due to the continuous evolution of e-management applications, the system must have a potential for **development capability**. It is also important that the system has high **usability**. It must support multiple languages, be easy to learn and easy to use, facilitate the process of obtaining accurate information, analyse data and provide reliable results to decision makers for improvement plans – otherwise the user will feel frustrated and return to the traditional way of working (Ndou, 2004).

Appling e-management systems in managing QA can be considered as a large change in the work style, therefore, **gradual application** should be implemented to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the new way of working. Then a strong decision from the university management is required to convert QA operation to the new system. This study found that the conviction of **senior management** and influential decision-makers in the potential benefits of e-management is essential to support the application and encourage staff (Selvaratnam, 2004, Al-Tamam, 2007, Ndou, 2004).

Before applying a new e-management system there is an urgent need for sufficient practical **staff development** programs that explain the new processes. It is very important to ensure proper training programs are available at the right times and provided by professional experts in order to highlight the advantages of e-management and how it can be used in QA operations (Ndou, 2004, Qadori, 2010).

Using e-management applications at every level of the institution will facilitate and enhance the operation of QA; however, the **integration** and **open communication** between the main QA office and other sectors of the institution must be promoted in order to exchange information and experience. This can be achieved by establishing an information centre in the main QA office (Amara and Buaichh, 2010).

Successful application of e-management in QA operations needs adequate **financial support** for offering systems, equipment and professional training. The institution must offer sufficient and direct **technical support** with the e-management system to overcome challenges that users confront in its application.

7. External Factors

Governments have an important role to play in strengthening QA in HEIs. They may not have a direct role, but they have the power to oversee education and develop regulatory policies. Therefore, governments should establish and support a culture of QA in educational institutions through the development of regulatory policies, providing financial support, training national cadres and attracting international cadres to work on this project. In addition, it is necessary to support national quality bodies and strengthen their relations with external bodies to benefit from global experience.

In the case of Saudi Arabian HE, more support, pressure and strong decisions are required from the Ministry of Education to motivate all Saudi universities to achieve QA standards quickly. **International and national QA bodies** are also responsible for building QA systems that consider carefully the differences in abilities, resources and cultures between countries' HE systems, and even within the countries themselves. In particular, the national QA bodies must ensure that QAPs and standards are fit, clear, applicable and adaptable, with high transparency. In addition, the QA bodies must build networks between international and national QA bodies to exchange knowledge, experience of good practice, and information. This can help increase awareness of QA, overcome common challenges and qualify regional staff at HEIs. In KSA the NCAAA has a good system and standards, but needs to increase their impact on universities to enhance QA operation. They should adopt more appropriate models and support to help educational institutions overcome system obstacles and lack of adequate expertise. They must go out into the field and visit educational institutions to get a closer look at QA operation and the challenges that institutions face during implementation. This would help to develop the QA system and make it more appropriate to the conditions of the institutions (Amin et al., 2005).

In a society characterised by faith, considering quality as a value in the light of **religion and culture** could help enhance awareness among university staff. It has been found in this study and in the literature that the beliefs of individuals can play an important role in convincing stakeholders to commit actively to the participation in QA (Hambler, 2015, Lisec et al., 2008).

Finally, to achieve the desired results of QA in HEIs, QA practices must be part of the daily routine of staff. This requires support of all kinds, more equitable opportunities, encouraging everyone to participate, and not, for whatever reason, limit participation and support to particular groups. In addition, the objectives of QA and procedures must be clear and committed to by all stakeholders at every level in the educational institution. It can also be concluded that developing e-management systems for QA can be challenging and takes great effort, but it is very much worth the exertion.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Introduction

In general, there is a paucity of literature dealing with the operation of QA from the perspectives of stakeholders; and particularly so in KSA. This study has made a contribution to filling this gap. It draws attention to some of the realities of QA, the nature of challenges faced and the potential of e-management for operations. Taking into account the motivation and the findings of this research, it is hoped that this study contributes to enriching knowledge in its field. Thus, it can be argued that the recommendations derived from the conclusion of this research have application to any HE institution in similar conditions.

There were three main questions informing this research:

1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?
2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?
3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

A case study methodology was applied to this research, using qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments simultaneously to establish a comprehensive picture of the operation of QA from the perspectives of stakeholders in one large university within Saudi HE. The data collection instruments have been developed carefully and examined by applicable validity and reliability tests and procedures. The participants represented three groups of stakeholders: management, QA (both internal and external experts), and general faculty members. The number of participants was 23 in interviews, 9 in focus groups, and 301 in the survey. The qualitative data was analysed thematically and the quantitative data analysed descriptively, using SPSS. The results were discussed critically along with literature relevant to the issues at hand. The main aim of this study was addressed by synthesising the research findings, along with related literature, into a heuristic framework intended to have reform and strategic utility for stakeholders responsible for HE in Saudi Arabia’s HIEs and practitioners in the QA field.

This chapter outlines the major findings of this research and associated conclusions in order to briefly address each main question. In addition, based on the literature and the

research findings, some recommendations to enhance QA operation, and for further research, will be presented.

10.2 Summary of the Research Findings

Data were collected about QA operations from the research context in order to create a broad overview of stakeholders' attitudes, awareness and understandings of QA. This was valuable in the interpretation phase, in order to fully answer the research questions.

The study found that there is a widespread belief in the research context that quality is very important in HE. However, the stakeholders believe QA is still a new trend in Saudi HE and that universities have to take a serious stance to spread QA culture, and to enhance participation in its procedures. The study revealed several factors that could influence stakeholders' engagement, such as the extent of understanding quality and QA concepts. There were multiple levels of understanding on the one hand and confusion on the other. For example, some management stakeholders believe QA is associated with all academic tasks, while others believe its purpose is to obtain institutional accreditation. However, QA staff believe that the concept of QA varies from one place to another, based on the nature and practices of each institution. Moreover, the study revealed a lack of agreement among stakeholders as to the definition of QA. The definitions provided by the participants do not demonstrate a deep understanding of QA and its processes, but they do indicate the presence of a state of uncertainty, which may weaken the effectiveness of the QA operations, leading to issues such as completing in QA forms in different ways, depending on personal understanding. This disparity also emerged in stakeholders' awareness and understanding of QAPs. Nevertheless, experience and qualifications seem to play a significant role as QA staff showed a wide knowledge and a broad understanding of QA and its operation. The study revealed that this was due to training programmes that have been made available for a limited time, in order to prepare qualified individuals to work in QA offices. However, there is a concern that most qualified staff are non-Saudi, which poses a challenge when they leave the university.

The study revealed that the case study university has two paths: QA and institutional accreditation. There were several regulations and a number of offices and committees were established to manage the operation of QA. However, the university is still struggling in applying QAPs and obtaining institutional accreditation. Bureaucratic procedure emerged as one factor in these failings because it makes the QA operation move very slowly, which

means the evidence collected at the beginning of and during the work cycle becomes old before it can be used, and is therefore unreliable. This necessitates going back to the first square and starting the process again. One interesting discovery was the existence of differences between old established colleges and newly established colleges in the operation of QA. The study revealed that QA practices are significantly higher in new colleges because they were established based on new educational trends, including QA; they have clear plans, staff make continuous efforts, there is a low number of students and staff, a review system, clear descriptions of academic programmes, and clear and declared guidelines for procedures. Also, there is significant financial support from senior management, which helps these colleges to attract qualified staff. Conversely, the pace of QA operation in the old colleges is slow, due to the enormous number of students and staff, huge academic and administrative loads, old academic plans and limited support available from senior management.

Having provided an overview of the general issues across QA operations in the case study institution, the main research questions are briefly addressed below.

Q1. In the context of the case study, to what extent are stakeholders engaging in the QA operation across different levels in the institution?

This study found that participants from all levels of the university agreed that faculty members have a substantial role in the operation of QA, and that QA requirements are a primary part of academic commitments. Interestingly, the results showed that stakeholders are very willing to engage in the QA operation at an individual level; this could be based on self-motivation – such as achieving QA standards and involvement in QA committees. Notwithstanding this positive response, not all faculty members were accepting of the change in the QA system. There are those who support and engage effectively and those who reject the idea because of uncertainty, or having no clear understanding of, QA concepts and procedures.

What is curious is that the stakeholders displayed a dispirited estimation of the reality of engagement in QA operations. There is a belief that stakeholders are accomplishing the QA requirements simply because they are compulsory. Some participants asserted that the level of engagement is very low because there are a significant number of staff who stand

away from or against QA. Several issues emerged; such as the heavy workload and a perception that QA requirements are administrative matters.

This study has identified that the largest group of stakeholders participating in QA operation is made up of QA staff followed by administrative and faculty staff. It is possible that QA staff have a greater desire to complete the work and better experiences than other groups. This finding was supported by other data in this study, which suggested that stakeholders with experience participate significantly more than those with no experience in QA.

The results indicate that there is a wide agreement that the availability of clear guidelines for the operation of QA would be influential in ensuring high levels of engagement. Concerning the research context, the results highlighted two key perspectives; few stakeholders refer to the existence of a clear guide for the operation of QA. However, the largest group of stakeholders stipulate the need for a clear guide for QA operations. Nevertheless, the results show a disparity in perspectives concerning participation toward the urgent need for a guide; as a small group of participants believe there is no need for a guide and standards because the procedures are clear, while a large group of participants consider the absence of practical guidance a critical issue that has a negative impact. Surprisingly, the results suggest that this difference in stakeholders' perspectives has led to an imbalance in the operation of QA and to a conflict among stakeholders, where everyone seeks to carry out the procedures according to their own understanding.

One major finding was that there is a noticeable disparity between stakeholders' engagement at old established colleges and new ones. Several factors driving this trend emerged, such as the work environment, availability of support from senior management, availability of human and financial support, and the extent of understanding of QAPs. The results indicated that in the new colleges, stakeholders have a high belief in the importance of QA and its benefits, and know how to involve themselves effectively in the operation. The results suggested that new colleges have clear plans and deadlines for QA tasks and stakeholders have a desire to engage in QA work. However, in older colleges, stakeholders' engagement is fluctuating, which suggests that the concept of QA is unclear and its culture not widely spread among staff. Moreover, these colleges suffer from a lack of financial and human resources and a lack of important management systems, such as performance

monitoring and information systems. The data suggested that monitoring the operation and following up with stakeholders could make a difference in the level of engagement.

The study also revealed that training programmes and workshops about QA are seen as an effective approach to enhance the level of stakeholders' engagement. The results indicated that training and workshops make them experts, and after that, they are able to support their colleagues in their own work sectors.

Q2. In the context of the case study, what are the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of an effective QA operation?

The study identified a large volume of evidence of an ongoing level of crisis in relation to the participation of stakeholders in QA operation, due to a number of challenges, such as management issues, individual attitudes, staff development, incentives and external factors.

Management Challenges

Data suggested there is a wide belief that senior management is responsible for the failure to achieve QA objectives for many reasons. First, some management stakeholders have a lack of understanding of the concept and procedures of QA. Second, the QA issue does not seem to be a priority for senior management. Third, there is a lack of qualified staff to manage the QA operation. Fourth, there is a lack of support provided by management, such as human and technological resources. The last and most important reason is the approach followed by management upon the first introduction of QA in the university; the management enforced the application of new QAPs without giving sufficient time to establish it as part of the culture among stakeholders, with the aim of obtaining institutional accreditation. This has led to conflicts between management and stakeholders and the emergence of resistance.

Another management challenge is the composition of QA across the deanships, offices and committees, and the distribution of powers and roles. The data showed that there is instability in terms of workflow, because the administrators of QA sectors are usually replaced after a short time and new administrators make new plans with a new team and then start again from the beginning. Moreover, the study revealed that management do not sufficiently trust those managing QA. For example, staff have been given limited powers to monitor the QA operation and improve it.

One of the obvious challenges revealed in this research was the institutional management structure, which does not support effective communication between managerial levels and stakeholders. In this case, communication is controlled by lengthy, involved, bureaucratic regulations, which leads to slower QAPs. Moreover, this challenge becomes more crucial when communication is also ineffective between women's QA offices and men's QA offices, which are separated for cultural reasons. The data indicated that males engage significantly more than females in QA. This might be because of poor communication between males leading the main QA functions and female QA sections, and the lack of adequate operational authority in the female sections.

Stakeholders' Challenges

This study revealed that there are stakeholders, at all levels in the institution, who have a superficial understanding and a lack of a sufficient awareness of QA concepts. Again, the results suggest this is because the university was attempting to change the quality system in a short period of time, and introduce a new system with too much focus on the pursuit of institutional accreditation, rather than QA itself. This has not allowed a QA culture to be spread among stakeholders. Another critical challenge is the low number of staff qualified to participate in QA operation. The results suggest that this challenge becomes more critical when the few qualified staff leave the institution – most of them non-Saudis – for any reason, and without a suitable replacement. The data showed that non-Saudis engage significantly more in QA operation than Saudi staff.

Although the quantitative results indicate that the majority of stakeholders believe that QA requirements are part of their duty, the qualitative results suggest that the most prominent challenge is a large sense of resistance to the application of QA, at all levels of the university. This study discovered several critical reasons for stakeholders' resistance. First, some senior stakeholders are unwilling to adopt new processes and perspectives. Second, some stakeholders believe there is no need to change the existing mechanisms of quality checking. Third, some stakeholders seem unwilling to participate in any kind of change. Fourth, QA requirements are sometimes perceived as additional work on top of academic work, and finally, there are those who believe that the procedures pose a threat to privacy.

The study also discovered unexpected factors that influence the extent of stakeholders' engagement. These results indicate conflict among management and stakeholders, due to senior management requiring institution staff to apply QAPs without giving them

opportunities to participate in the initial stages of it, such as planning and decision making. This has led faculty members to feel frustrated because management ignore their views, which causes a loss of enthusiasm to participate at a later stage. In addition, this study found another type of conflict that can emerge among QA staff and faculty members; some QA staff might not use some of their powers in monitoring and following up in order to avoid personal conflicts.

Workload emerged repeatedly as a major challenge complained by stakeholders, and which seems to have a negative impact on the extent of stakeholders' participation in QA operations, depending on intuitional position and commitments.

QAP Challenges

The study revealed that QAPs are proceeding at a desirable pace in a few sectors, slowly in some sectors and are semi-stalled in others. The results indicate that this is due to several QA procedural challenges. Most QAPs and requirements need a long time and considerable effort to accomplish, which increases bureaucratic procedures, in the absence of sufficient completion incentives. It seems that the large number of QAPs may lead stakeholders to avoid engagement. It can also be inferred from the results that using e-management applications to reform the traditional management procedures has significant potential to support success. In relation to this, the study discovered that access to required data for QA is limited because of the lack of e-systems and bureaucratic procedures that require multiple permissions to ensure access.

The study also indicated several challenges confronting stakeholders in QA operations, such as the lack of a practical manual explaining QAPs and their requirements, the use of English on QA forms, and the lack of analysis and evaluation mechanisms for the whole of the QA operation. The results showed a high demand for ongoing studies to review the reality of the operation and identify solutions to overcome operational challenges.

Staff Development Challenges

The study revealed that there are few training programmes relating to the operation of QA; further, the results indicate that the number of individuals attending the programmes is small. Several factors emerged from the data that support this, such as the lack of stakeholder uptake of QA and available training programmes and workshops providing

stakeholders with only superficial information about QA, rather than providing in-depth training on paradigms, procedures and instruments. This may lead some stakeholders to avoid engagement in the operation because they have insufficient understanding or knowledge.

Moreover, the study found some vital criticisms about the training programmes available. For example, the data highlighted that training opportunities are not available equally to all stakeholders; some important programs are offered only in English. In addition, the programme quality is unsatisfactory and most of the trainers are not motivating or creditable. Announcements of training programmes do not reach all stakeholders and are sometimes delayed. Finally, the times when the programmes are held often do not fit with the schedules of a large number of stakeholders.

Incentives Challenges

This study revealed that the availability of incentives can be a catalyst for stakeholders to put more effort in the operation of QA. The results indicate that a system of, what were viewed, as adequate incentives has been in place since the start of the QA project; however, after a short time, criticism of this system emerged. Some data indicate that financial incentives were granted unequally, there is a delay in distribution, and that the stakeholders felt frustrated. It seems this creates a sort of mistrust between some faculty members and university management, and it destroys their enthusiasm toward engagement.

External Challenges

This study identified some external challenges that might decrease the participation of stakeholders in QA operation. There are some criticisms of NCAAA for the limited support they provide to Saudi universities. Furthermore, the unified QA system created by NCAAA does not take into consideration each university's individual conditions. This creates a challenge for those universities still engaged in the initial stages of QA, with a limited number of experts and qualified staff. The study found that a large number of stakeholders believe that QA and its standards do not conform to institutional culture, or local values and religious sensibility; therefore, there is a demand to reformulate it to make it more suitable and appropriate to institutional contexts.

Q3. In the context of the case study, what are stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e-management applications in any QA operation?

This research found that the case study university has a well-developed technological infrastructure and there are a significant number of e-management applications providing a variety of services for multiple academic and administrative purposes. However, the results also suggest that stakeholders have a superficial understanding of e-management and its applications. Moreover, there is some disapproval over the limited access to these services for QA purposes. The data highlights the lack of coordination between the university's sectors, and that QA staff cannot take full advantage of the e-management applications because access is limited. Therefore, there is a high demand for more e-applications, facilitating accessibility, communication, and management of transactions between individuals and all university units.

One major, unexpected finding is that there is a wide positive perception of and attitude toward the important, positive role that e-management can play in the operation of QA. Participants emphasised the urgent need to develop a strategy to apply e-management in QA practice. However, the results highlighted that the relationship between QA operations and e-management in the university is limited or unclear. Only one e-system is used in QA operations for the assessment of academic programmes and faculty members. Interestingly, some newly established colleges have limited initiatives that could be expanded and be used in the future to enhance the systemic operation of QA.

The data suggests that e-management could provide essential solutions to a number of challenges confronting stakeholders in QA operations. The results outlined five potential areas that e-management can help in QA operation; first: administration, such as distribution of roles, speeding up decision-making and reducing bureaucracy; second: operations, such as improving workflow, transparency, flexibility and efficiency; third, information management, such as speeding up communication, accessibility and documentation; fourth, control and evaluation, such as monitoring and reviewing performance; fifth, support, such as compatibility with modern work styles and speedy responses to enquiries.

Although there are potential benefits for including e-management in QA, the study also revealed several potential challenges that could confront HEIs in taking full advantage of

e-management. These challenges relate to management aspects, stakeholders, and technical issues.

Management Challenges

This study suggests that senior management who remain unconvinced over the use of e-management in the operation of QA could be a serious challenge; leaders and decision makers have power over projects for change in their work methods, and can provide the financial and human support to ensure the success of implementation. The research highlighted that resistance emerging from the senior management can or may obstruct implementation. Results indicated several possible factors behind this resistance, such as perceiving changes as a threat and an enforcement tool to deliver work quickly; similarly, the e-management mechanism may collide with established bureaucratic approaches. The second management challenge is the structure of the institution. In the case study university, the results highlighted a lack of good communication, coordination and cooperation, which is inconsistent with the principles of e-management. This finding prompts the need for forms of review into the structure of the university and the presence of activate communication between all sectors; looking to ensure its suitability for the application of e-management in QA operations.

Stakeholders' Challenges

In terms of stakeholder participation in e-management systems to operate QA, one expected challenge is the lack of qualified staff to manage any new system. Another major challenge is the possibility of resistance to the use of e-management in QA. The study highlighted several reasons for stakeholder resistance, such as lack of confidence towards using communication technology, anxiety about the applicability or utility of e-management to performance monitoring, the violation of privacy, and the lack of training programmes on e-applications. The results outlined the urgency and importance of offering training to prepare stakeholders for new systems, especially older stakeholders and individuals who have never worked on similar systems; training, providing ongoing support after the launch of a system and incentives are important keys to encouraging stakeholders to embrace e-management applications in the operation of QA.

Technical Challenges

The current study revealed that the case study university has an advanced electronic environment that stimulates the use of e-management applications; therefore, using these applications will not require additional expensive equipment. However, the provision of an adequate system for the management of QA in line with the needs and culture of the work environment could require the university to face the challenges of designing its own system, dealing with a lack of qualified staff and limited financial and operating platform resources. The results indicate that if designing an e-system for managing QA, staff need to determine appropriate system objectives and requirements; the system must be flexible, amenable and usable, and the information it contains fully secured. Moreover, respondents emphasised that the system must not only comply with NCAAA standards in KSA, but at the same time should ideally support the QA and accreditation systems of other international bodies and agencies and operate with multiple languages.

10.3 Recommendations from the Study

First of all, the researcher highly recommends that policy and decision makers, universities management and academic staff give careful consideration to the heuristic framework developed in this research in evolving and developing QA culture and functions to significantly enhance the level of systemic operation. This framework derives its potential for practical action from being established by a synthesis of the literature and the perceptions of the stakeholders who have experienced the reality of QA operation in the case study context. In addition, this framework helps to draw attention to the major challenges in the operation of highly productive QAP, to potential solutions, and to the possible advantages of e-management in QA operation. This will be helpful for the case study university and for other HEIs that have the same contextual conditions and are committed to enhancing QA operations and overcoming the many challenges that hinder progress to excellence.

In drawing on the research findings, it is possible to put forth the following recommendations for the consideration of governments, educational policy and decision makers, and HEIs:

Recommendations for governments, and educational policy and decision makers

1. Careful planning is required before launching any projects involving change in HE systems to minimise the risk of failure.
2. Adopt friendly models of reform and change in HE, and offering sufficient support to ensure successful implementation and low resistance.
3. Provide academic institutions with sufficiently qualified staff, technological infrastructure and financial resources.
4. Conduct continuous academic activities, such as conferences and workshops, to spread the culture of QA and build a clear understanding of its concepts within academic sectors.
5. Review the circumstances and resources of all HEIs and establish flexible versions of QA systems that suit each cluster of universities, based on local conditions.
6. Encourage HEIs to build a wide network to exchange experience, information, and experts in QA.
7. Encourage QA commissions and bodies to develop e-management systems to ensure efficient intergraded high quality operations.

Recommendation for higher education institutions

1. Alleviate managerial bureaucratic tasks and decentralise management in the university, allowing flexible management to emerge, while reducing the number of managerial levels that transactions have to go through.
2. Build a strong relationship between the leadership and staff in the university, based on the principles of trust, transparency and empowerment, while providing all with equal rights in participation, rewards and training.
3. Apply an effective and transparent system to receive and act upon the benefits of stakeholders' feedback. This is important in enhancing engagement, trust and understanding of the reality of workflow.
4. Encourage successful sectors in QA operation to share and exchange their experiences with other university units.
5. Establish a research centre to conduct continuous studies; reviewing and assessing the QA operation, and developing appropriate mechanisms to deal with problems that may arise during operation.
6. Establish external expert committees to support, monitor and assess the operation of QA.
7. Develop and apply an appropriate e-management system to enhance the operation of QA.

10.4 Suggestions for Further Research

One of the outcomes of this research is that the literature review and results highlight several significant directions for further research. There is a gap in the literature considering the field of QA reform in Saudi HE. It would be valuable to carry out a similar study in all universities in KSA in order to explore the perspectives of stakeholders toward QA operations, as they clearly have vital roles in achieving high quality education. This will help policy makers in KSA to assess the reality of HEIs, discover the challenges confronting QA operations, and allow the strategic provision of institutional support.

Arising from the findings of this study, it can be asserted that further research is needed to explore several issues in relation to the field of QA, whether in KSA, or in other countries, particularly in relation to:

1. Testing the applicability of the heuristic framework of QA developed in this research to evaluate its impact on the enhancement of QA operations.
2. The role of government in supporting universities to ensure the quality of HE.
3. The integration of QAPs and e-management from a computing and software perspective.
4. Forms of effective leadership for successful QA operations.
5. The impact of quality staff development on stakeholders' engagement in QA operations.
6. The impact of social or organisational culture on stakeholders' engagement in QA operations.
7. The impact of staff relationships in carrying out auditing and assessment procedures.
8. Developing effective approaches to removing stakeholder resistance to necessity projects of change within HE, particularly in developing countries.

10.5 Summary

This research set out to develop a heuristic framework to enhance the operation of QA in Saudi HEIs. The current study revealed that stakeholder engagement in QA is uneven and fluctuating; it is affected by many factors and limited by a number of notable challenges. In addition, this study highlighted the potential enhancement and support e-management could provide to QA operations. Further, the study has attempted to add to the growing body of literature in the fields of change in HE, QA, and e-management. Finally, it is hoped that the framework developed by this research will be valuable for QA operations within HEIs globally, and particularly in KSA.

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Appendices

Appendix 1A: The structure of interview - Scoping study (English)

Interview schedule

1. **Can you tell me about your role here in the university?**

2. **Does your role involve you in any aspects of QA?**
   - *If yes*, would you like to say little bit about it.
   - Can you give an example?
   - Has QA influenced or changed your role or the approach you take?
   - Are you aware of any other changes across the university that has resulted from the introduction of QA requirements?

3. **Are you familiar with any aspects of the QA framework for this university?**
   - (*If yes*) Could you explain how you understand those aspects?
   - Can you give an example how it works in practice?

4. **Are you familiar with any aspects of the e-administration framework in the university?**
   - (*If yes*) Could you explain how this connects to your role?
   - Can you give an example how this works in practice?

5. **If you wanted or needed to know more about the QA system or e-administration, how could you find this information?**
   Could give an example?

6. **Are there links between QA and E-administration in the university?**
7. *If yes...*
   - Could give an example?
   - What are the benefits of these links?
   - Could give an example?

8. **Is there a strategy for developing links between the QA and e-administration in the university?** *If yes...*
   - Are there any internal and external pressures influencing that development?
   - Would you describe them as positive or negative?
   - Could you give some examples?

9. **Do you know of any cooperation between your university and government agencies, independent national/international agencies/experts or other bodies?**
   - *If yes*, Could you give me any examples?
   - How would you describe the form this cooperation takes?

10. **Is there anything else about QA or e-administration and the links between them that you think it is relevant and we have not discussed?**
    - *If yes*, could you say little bit about it?
    - Could give an example?

Appendix 1B: The structure of interview - Scoping study (Arabic)

أسئلة المقابلة:

1. هل يمكنك أن تحدثني حول دورك في الجامعة؟

2. هل دورك ينطوي أو له علاقة بأي جانب من جوانب نظام الجودة؟

- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل تود أن تحدثني قليلا عن ذلك.
- هل يمكنك أن تعطي مثالا؟
- هل ضمان الجودة غير أو أثر على الطريقة أو الأسلوب الذي تتبعه في قيامك بدورك؟
- هل أنت على دراية بأي تغييرات في الجامعة نتجت عن إدخال نظام ضمان الجودة في الجامعة؟

3. هل أنت على دراية أو مرتبط بأي جانب من جوانب الإطار العملي أو التنظيمي لنام ضمان الجودة في الجامعة؟

- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل يمكنك أن تشرح كيف تفهم تلك الجوانب؟
- هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال كيف ينفذ ذلك ويطبق عمليا؟

4. هل أنت على دراية أو علاقة بأي جانب من جوانب الإطار العملي للإدارة الإلكترونية في الجامعة؟

- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل يمكنك أن تشرح إذا كان له ارتباط بعملك أو دورك؟
- هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال كيف ينفذ ذلك ويطبق عمليا؟

5. إذا كانت ترغب أو تحتاج أن تعرف المزيد من المعلومات عن ضمان الجودة أو الإدارة الإلكترونية, كيف يمكنك الحصول عليها؟

- هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال على ذلك؟

6. هل هناك ارتباط أو علاقة بين نظام ضمان الجودة والإدارة الإلكترونية في الجامعة؟

7. إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال على ذلك؟

- ما هي الفوائد أو المنافع من هذه العلاقات والارتباطات؟
- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال على ذلك؟

8. هل هناك استراتيجية لتطوير العلاقة ين ضمان الجودة والإدارة الإلكترونية في الجامعة؟

- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل هناك أي ضغوط داخلية أو خارجية تؤثر على عملية تطوير العلاقة بينهما؟
- هل تنظر لهذه الضغوط على أنها إيجابية أم سلبية؟
- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل يمكنك إعطاء أمثلة على ذلك؟

9. هل تعرف أن هناك تعاونا بين جامعتكم وبين هيئات حكومية/مؤسسات أو مستقلة داخل المملكة أو هيئات/مؤسسات حكومية عالمية أو مستقلة, أو مع خبراء أو مع منظمات أخرى؟

- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل يمكنك إعطاء أمثلة؟
- هل يمكنك وصف ذلك التعاون؟

10. هل هناك أي شيء آخر له ارتباط بموضوعنا في هذا اللقاء عن ضمان الجودة الإدارة الإلكترونية أو العلاقة بينهما ولم نناقشه؟

- إذا كانت الإجابة نعم, هل تود الحديث عن ذلك قليلا؟
- هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال على ذلك؟

Appendix 2A: The structure of interview – Main study (English)

Interview schedule:

1. **Can you explain briefly what Quality Assurance means to you?**

2. **Can you describe any aspects of the Quality Assurance Process that you are aware of in this University?**
   - Do you have any role in the operation of Quality Assurance process?
   - *If yes,* could you say little bit about your role?
3. **How well do you think faculty members participate in the Quality Assurance process?**
   - Could you give any examples?
   - Are there engagement standards?
   - *If yes,* can you describe the standards for me?
   - *If no,* Do you think this has had any effect on the level of faculty members' engagement?
4. **Is there any particular staff development required by stakeholders to participate effectively in the Quality Assurance Process?**
   - *If yes,* does the university provide opportunities to obtain staff development?
   - Could you give any examples?
5. **Are you aware of any difficulties or challenges that reduce the level of engagement in the Quality Assurance Process?**
   - *If yes,* what are these challenges?
   - Have you faced one of them?
   - *If yes*, can you describe the situation?
6. **Are there information and communication centres in the university?**
   - *If yes,* do they provide services and support to the operation of Quality Assurance process?
   - Do they have any effect on the operation of Quality assurance process?
7. **Could you explain briefly what you would understand by the idea of e-management?**
   If yes, Could you give examples?
8. ***(If Yes)* What services do you think e-management applications could provide to enhance or improve the operation of Quality Assurance Process?**
   - Could you give examples?
   - Could explain how it works?
9. ***(If Yes)* Are there any challenges that hinder the use or establishment of e-management system to operate Quality Assurance Processes?**
   - *If yes,* what are these challenges?
   - How do you think they could be overcome?
10. **Is there anything else about Quality Assurance or e-management and the links between them that you think it is relevant and we have not discussed?**

Appendix 2B: The structure of interview – Main study (Arabic)

أسئلة المقابلة:

1. **هل يمكن أن تشرح بإيجاز ماذا يعني مفهوم ضمان الجودة بالنسبة لك؟**
2. **هل يمكنك وصف أي من جوانب عملية ضمان الجودة التي أنت على علم بها في الجامعة؟**
   - هل لديك أي دور في إدارة وتسيير عمليات ضمان الجودة؟
   - إذا كان الجواب نعم، هل يمكن أن تتحدث قليلا عن دورك؟
3. **إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن أعضاء هيئة التدريس يشاركون جيدا في عملية ضمان الجودة؟**
   - هل يمكنك إعطاء أي أمثلة على ذلك؟
   - هل هناك معايير للمشاركة؟
   - إذا كان الجواب نعم، هل يمكنك أن تصف لي تلك المعايير؟
   - إذا كانت الإجابة لا، هل تعتقد أن لذلك أي تأثير على مستوى مشاركة أعضاء هيئة التدريس؟
4. **هل هناك أي تطوير وظيفي خاص مطلوب من قبل الجهات المعنية للمشاركة بفعالية في عمليات ضمان الجودة؟**
   - إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، هل توفر الجامعة فرصا كافية تدريبية لتنمية وتطوير قدرات أعضاء هيئة التدريس؟
   - هل يمكنك إعطاء أمثلة على ذلك؟
5. **هل أنت على علم بأي صعوبات أو تحديات قد تقلل من مستوى المشاركة في عمليات ضمان الجودة؟**
   - إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، ما هي تلك التحديات؟
   - هل واجهت أيا منها؟
   - إذا كان الجواب نعم، هل يمكنك وصف الحالة؟
6. **هل هناك مراكز للمعلومات والاتصالات في الجامعة؟**
   - إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، هل تقدم تلك المراكز دعما وخدمات لإدارة وتسيير عمليات ضمان الجودة؟
   - هل لتلك المراكز أي تأثير على سير عملية ضمان الجودة؟
7. **هل يمكنك أن تشرح بإيجاز ماذا تفهم من فكرة الإدارة الإلكترونية؟**
   - إذا كان الجواب نعم، هل يمكنك إعطاء أمثلة على ذلك؟
8. **(إذا كانت الإجابة نعم) ما هي الخدمات التي تعتقد أن تطبيقات الإدارة الإلكترونية يمكن أن تقدمها لتعزيز أو تحسين إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة؟**
   - هل يمكنك إعطاء أمثلة على ذلك؟
   - هل يمكن أن تشرح كيف يمكن أن تعمل؟
9. **(إذا كانت الإجابة نعم) هل هناك أي تحديات تعيق إنشاء نظام إداري إلكتروني لإدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة؟**
   - إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، فما هي هذه التحديات؟
   - كيف يمكن التغلب على تلك التحديات من وجهة نظرك؟
10. **هل هناك أي شيء آخر حول ضمان الجودة أو الإدارة الإلكترونية والعلاقة بينهما وتعتقد أنه ذو صلة بالموضوع ولكننا لم نتناوله أثناء حديثنا؟**

Appendix 3: The structure of focus group (English/ Arabic)

Focus group structure:

Questions:

1. **How do you evaluate the development of Quality Assurance operation at the university since it began several years ago and so far? (briefly)**

كيف تقيمون تطوير عملية ضمان الجودة في الجامعة منذ أن بدأت قبل عدة سنوات وحتى الآن؟

2. **Are there any elements missing in Quality Assurance process leading to the emergence of challenges during the operation?**

هل هناك أي حلقات مفقودة في سلسلة عمليات ضمان الجودة مما يؤدي إلى ظهور تحديات؟

3. **What are the main challenges that confronting the operation of Quality Assurance processes?**

ما هي التحديات الرئيسية التي تواجه عملية من عمليات ضمان الجودة؟

4. **How the following issues could affect the operation of Quality Assurance processes in the university?**

كيف تؤثر الأمور التالية على تسيير عمليات ضمان الجودة؟

- Senior management decisions and orientations
  قرارات الإدارة العليا في الجامعة وتوجهاتها
- Organization structure
  الهيكل التنظيمي للجامعة
- Information and communication technologies
  التقنية ووسائل التواصل الإلكترونية في الجامعة
- Stakeholders' Engagement
  مشاركة أعضاء هيئة التدريس
- Stakeholders' development and training
  التطوير والتدريب لأعضاء هيئة التدريس

5. **What are the necessary actions to enhance stockholders' engagement in the operation of Quality Assurance processes?**

ما هي الخطوات الضرورية لتعزيز وزيادة مشاركة أعضاء هيئة التدريس في عمليات ضمان الجودة؟

6. **What role do you think e-management applications could play to enhance or improve the operation of Quality assurance processes?**

ما الدور الذي يمكن أن تلعبه الإدارة الإلكترونية لتعزيز أو تحسين أداء عمليات ضمان الجودة؟

7. **What suggestions do you have to enhance the operation of Quality Assurance processes?**

ما هي مقترحاتك لتعزيز وتحسين عمليات ضمان الجودة؟

8. **Is there anything else would you like to say about Quality Assurance or e-management and the links between them?**

هل تود أن تضيف أي معلومات عن ضمان الجودة أو الإدارة الإلكترونية أو العلاقة بينهما؟

Appendix 4A: Plain language statement-Interview/Focus group (English)

University of Glasgow | School of Education

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

My name is Mossab Alholiby. I am a student at the University of Glasgow. As part of my doctoral studies I am carrying out a research project. The title of the project is:

Developing a Framework to Enhance the Operation of Quality Assurance Processes in Saudi Arabia Higher Education: Educational Management and E-management Perspectives

This research is supervised by Dr Robert Doherty at the University of Glasgow (email: Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk telephone: 01413303091) and Prof Victor Lally of the University of Glasgow (email: victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk, telephone: 0141 3303424).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2. Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in this research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please feel free to ask questions about anything you are unclear about or if you would like to have more information. Please take your time to consider whether you wish to take part.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The main purpose of the study is to enhance the operation of quality assurance processes in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions by: exploring stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QA processes, Identifying the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of QA processes and exploring stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e- management tools in the operation of QA processes. In addition, it seeks to assist the case study University to move towards the development of high quality processes and management in all its departments. This research will seek to provide a developmental framework for academic leaders in adopting e-management and quality assurance systems in their management of change towards national standards for higher education quality. To date, there has been virtually no research in this area undertaken in Saudi Arabia.

4. Why have I been chosen?

The University in Saudi Arabia is being used as a focus for this study. Your professional role in the University organisation means that your views, understanding and professional experiences can inform this research and help to give an understanding of the development of quality assurance and e-management and their current operation in the University. Other colleagues with similar roles in the University are being asked to take part in the study.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you to decide whether or not to you wish to take part. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time and do not need to provide a reason. If you withdraw from the study you can ask to have any information you may have given withdrawn.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

In the event that you agree to take part in the study, you will participate in a face-to-face interview (for male) or by phone (for female) or in a focus group. The aim of this interview is to gather information about your role, experiences, and perspectives on the operation of quality assurance and e-management systems. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. The format of the interview will be semi-structured and an audio recorder will be used to record the interview. In addition, you will be given a questionnaire to complete. If you are asked to participate in a focus group, you will attend the meeting in the face-to-face or in distance (for female) with the researcher and a number of participants to discuss some of the study issues (Notes will be made by the researcher). It is anticipated that the focus group discussion will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by a number and any information about you will have your name and location removed so that you are unable to be identified.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

If requested, you can receive a copy of the results of this study. You may also receive a copy of the thesis arising from the study if you so request.

9. Who has reviewed the study?

This study will be reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow.

10. Contact for Further Information

For further information, please contact the researcher Mossab Alholiby email: m.alholiby.1@research.gla.ac.uk mobile phones: 00966503903031/00447580981428. The supervisors: Dr Robert Doherty at The University Glasgow; contact details: email: Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk telephone: 01413303091 and Prof Victor Lally at The University Glasgow; contact details: email: victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk, telephone: 0141 3303424.

In addition, if you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project you can contact the School of Education Ethics Officer by contacting Dr Margaret McCulloch at Margaret.McCulloch@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 4B: Plain language statement - Interview/Focus group (Arabic)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

بيان توضيحي

1. عنوان الدراسة وتفاصيلها:

اسمي مصعب الحليبي. طالب دكتوراه في جامعة جلاسجو في سكوتلاند بالمملكة المتحدة وأقوم بمشروع بحثي بعنوان :

تعزيز عملية ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية:

إطار عمل مقترح من وجهة نظر الإدارة التربوية والإلكترونية

يشرف على البحث:

د. روبرت دوهرتي -جامعة جلاسجو(الإيميل:Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:01413303091)،

وأ.د فيكتور لالي – جامعة جلاسجو (الإيميل:victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:3303424 0141).

شكرا لما ستبذله من وقت لقراءة التالي:

2. الدعوة للمشاركة:

تسعدني دعوتك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة وقبل أن تقرر ما إذا كنت ترب في المشاركة أم لا، إنه من المهم أن تعرف سبب تنفيذ الدراسة وعلى ماذا ستشمل الدراسة. أرجو أن تأخذ بعض الوقت لقراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية، ويمكنك أن تسألني وتناقشني فيها إذا رغبت في ذلك. أرجو أن تشعر بالحرية بالسؤال عن أي شيء قد يكون غير واضح لديك أو إذا كنت ترغب في مزيد من المعلومات. أرجو أن تأخذ وقتا كافيا للنظر فيما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة أم لا.

3. ما هو الهدف من الدراسة؟

الغرض الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو تعزيز إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية عن طريق استكشاف مدى المشاركة في تسيير عمليات ضمان الجودة، تحديد القضايا الرئيسية التي تواجه أصحاب المصلحة في تطوير عمليات ضمان الجودة، واستكشاف تصورات ومواقف أصحاب المصلحة المعنيين تجاه استخدام أدوات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة. إلى جانب ذلك، فإنه يسعى إلى مساعدة الجامعة محور الدراسة للمضي قدما نحو مستوى عال من الجودة في عمليات ضمان الجودة في كل قطاعاتها. وسوف تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى توفير إطار تطويري مقترح للقيادات الأكاديمية لاعتماد أنظمة الإدارة الإلكترونية وضمان الجودة في إدارة التغيير لتحقيق معايير الوطنية لجودة التعليم العالي. حتى الآن، لا يوجد حاليا أي دراسة في هذا المجال تحديدا أجريت في المملكة العربية السعودية.

4. لماذا تم اختياري؟

تم اختيار الجامعة في المملكة العربية السعودية لتكون محور هذه الدراسة ولتكون حالة واقعية لدراستها. كما تم اختياركم لدوركم المهني وخبرتكم في الجامعة، وللتعرف على وجهة نظركم التي سوف تسهم في إثراء هذه الدراسة، وإعطاء فهم دقيق لتطوير وتطبيق الإدارة الإلكترونية وضمان الجودة في الجامعة. الزملاء الآخرون الذين لديهم أدوار مشابهة ولهم علاقة بموضوع الدراسة ستتم دعوتهم للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة أيضا.

5. هل يجب أن أشارك؟

لك مطلق الحرية في المشاركة في الدراسة أو عدم المشاركة أيضاً، إذا قررت المشاركة من حقك الانسحاب في أي وقت دون الحاجة إلى تقديم سبب. كما يمكنك طلب الانسحاب أو إعادة المعلومات التي سبق أن قدمتها.

6. ماذا سيحدث إذا قبلت المشاركة في الدراسة؟

في حالة موافقتك على المشاركة في الدراسة، ستشارك في مقابلة وجها لوجه (للذكور) أو عن طريق الهاتف (للإناث) أو في مجموعة التركيز. الهدف من هذه المقابلة هو جمع المعلومات حول دورك وخبراتك ووجهات نظرك حول تشغيل أنظمة ضمان الجودة والإدارة الإلكترونية. ومن المتوقع أن تستغرق المقابلة حوالي 45 دقيقة لإكمالها. سيتم إجراء مقابلة شبه منظمة وسوف يستخدم مسجل الصوت لتسجيل المقابلة. إلى جانب ذلك، سوف تعطى استبيانا لإكماله. إذا طلب منك أن تشارك في مجموعة التركيز، سوف تحضر الاجتماع وجها لوجه (للذكور) وعن بعد (للإناث) مع الباحث وعدد من المشاركين لمناقشة بعض القضايا المتعلقة بالدراسة (سيتم أخذ ملاحظات مكتوبة من قبل الباحث). ومن المتوقع أن تستغرق المناقشة مع مجموعة التركيز حوالي 60 دقيقة لإكمالها.

7. هل ستكون مشاركتي محفوظة بشكل سري؟

جميع المعلومات التي ستجمع عنك أو منك خلال الدراسة سوف تحفظ بسرية وأمان كامل. سوف يرمز إليك برقم في الدراسة وسيزال كل ما يدل على اسمك أو أي معلومات عنك أو مكانك ولن يكون من الممكن بعدها التعرف عليك.

8. ماذا سيحدث لنتائج الدراسة؟

يمكنك الحصول على نسخة من النتائج أو نسخة من الدراسة إذا طلبت ذلك.

9. من قام وسيقوم بمراجعة الدراسة؟

هذه الدراسة ستتم مراجعتها من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث في كلية العلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة جلاسجو-المملكة المتحدة.

10. للتواصل لمزيد من المعلومات:

لمزيد من المعلومات أرجو الاتصال بالباحث: مصعب الحليبي (الإيميل: m.alholiby.1@research.gla.ac.uk 00966503903031/00447580981428) المشرفون على الدراسة: د. روبرت دوهرتي - جامعة جلاسجو(الإيميل: Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:01413303091) وأ.د فيكتور لالي – جامعة جلاسجو (الإيميل: victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:0141 3303424).

إذا كان هناك ما يقلقك بشأن هذه الدراسة يمكنك الاتصال بلجنة أخلاقيات البحوث كلية العلوم الاجتماعية برئاسة الدكتور مارغريت مكولوتش الإيميل Margaret.McCulloch@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 5A: Participation consent form - Interview/Focus group (English)

University of Glasgow | School of Education

Consent Form

Title of Project: Developing a Framework to Enhance the Operation of Quality Assurance Processes in Saudi Arabia Higher Education: Educational Management and E-management Perspectives

Name of Researcher: Mossab Alholiby

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I hereby consent to interviews or focus group discussions being audio-taped.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Signature	Date	Name of Participant
Signature	Date	Researcher

Appendix 5B: Participation consent form - Interview/Focus group (Arabic)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

استمارة الموافقة

عنوان البحث: تعزيز عملية ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية: إطار عمل مقترح من وجهة نظر الإدارة التربوية والإلكترونية

اسم الباحث: مصعب الحليبي

1. أؤكد أنني قرأت البيان التوضيحي للدراسة المذكورة أعلاه وقد أتيحت لي الفرصة للاستفسار وطرح الأسئلة.
2. أنا أدرك أن مشاركتي تطوعية وأن لي الحرية في الانسحاب في أي وقت دون أن أقدم أي سبب.
3. بموجب هذه الاستمارة أنا أقبل بأن يتم تسجيل المقابلة أو مجموعة النقاش صوتيا.
4. أنا أوافق على المشاركة في الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه.

التوقيع	التاريخ	اسم المشارك
_____	_____	_____

التوقيع	*التاريخ*	*الباحث*
_____	_____	_____

Appendix 6A: The structure of the questionnaire (English)

Dear Faculty Member,

As part of my PhD study at The University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK, I am undertaking a survey of the quality assurance operation at the University. The primary aim of this study is the development of a framework to enhance the operation of quality assurance processes in Saudi Arabia higher education institutions giving consideration to educational management, the potential of e-management and stakeholders' perspectives.

Your participation is vital for the success of this study and would be greatly appreciated. Completing this questionnaire will enable the researcher to achieve his aim and objectives.

I would use this opportunity to assure you that data will be treated as strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study.

Please:

- Read the enclosed information about the research.
- Note that you will indicate your consent to take part in the research by completing the questionnaire.
- Please do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- Place your response in the envelope provided then give it to secretary of the college.
- If you have been involved in the electronic questionnaire, you do not need to fill this questionnaire.

Thank you and I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Mossab Alholiby

Section (1): Personal Information:

Please put (✓) in the appropriate box (choose one)

1. Nationality:		**2. Gender**	
1. Saudi	☐	1. Male	☐
2. None Saudi	☐	2. Female	☐
3. Occupation: your current main role at the university		**4. Experience in the field of Quality Assurance**	
1. Faculty member	☐	1. No experience	☐
2. At administrative position	☐	2. There is experience	☐
3. Member of QA committees or offices or QA deanship	☐		

Section (2): Engagement in Quality Assurance Processes

(Please note: QA = Quality Assurance/ QAP = Quality Assurance Processes)

Please put (✓) in the appropriate box

No.	ITEM	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I have a clear understanding of the concept of QA and its standards and its processes					
2	I know what is required of me to be an active participant in QA processes					
3	I seek to achieve QA standards in the performance of my daily work					
4	I encourage and motivate my team to engage in QA processes					
5	I support the university policies and efforts to achieve QA standards					
6	I participate in surveys presented by the university about QA issues					
7	I get involved in interviews and workshops carried out within the University to discuss the quality of policies, regulations and procedures					

8	I participate in the processes of improvement and development of the university and/or the department where I work					
9	I take initiatives to improve the institutional performance and/or academic programs					
10	I participate in planning for QA process and its activities within the university					
11	I participate in self-assessments process for considering institutional performance					
12	I encourage students to participate in the process of academic programme evaluation					
13	I am willing to participate in committees and units that are active in QA processes					
14	I participate in the processes of collecting QA standards evidence, preparing reports and designing improvement plans					
15	The policies and decisions of university management support the participation of academics in QA					
16	The university encourages academics to participate in QAP sufficiently in financial and moral terms					
17	There are opportunities available for participation in making decisions about the operation of QA					
18	There are sufficient training opportunities to develop skills for practicing QA processes					
19	Training programs and workshops about QA are held at appropriate times					
20	I consider QAP as part of my duty career					
21	Taking part in QA processes requires difficult skills and lots of knowledge					
22	QA processes lead to increase working hours without sufficient financial					

	incentives					
23	There is an overlap in the roles and responsibilities across staff in quality committees and units					
24	QA standards are suitable for the University culture					

Section (3): E-Management and Quality Assurance

(Please note: EM: E-management = Electronic Management)

Please put (✓) in the appropriate box

No.	ITEM	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	EM contributes to strengthening the processes of supervision, follow-up and review of individual and organizational performance accurately and objectively					
2	EM Facilitates access to views of QA stakeholders inside and outside the university					
3	EM Reduces the bureaucracy and contributes to restructuring QAP to become more effective					
4	EM Enhances quality principles such as objectivity, transparency and accountability					
5	EM Provides sufficient information for decision-makers about the performance of QA committees/units and their strengths, weaknesses and achievements					
6	EM Improves and speeds up decision-making process at the QA managerial levels					
7	EM Facilitates the process of managing information and maintains data confidentiality					
8	EM Provides an opportunity for QAstakeholders to work from anywhere and at any time					
9	EM Helps to accelerate the achievement of QA standards and to maintain what has been achieved					

10	EM Used to link committees/quality focused units together in an integrated electronic communication system will enhance coordination and cooperation					
11	EM Helps the optimal use of human and financial resources in the QAP					
12	EM Supports the continuity and efficiency of QAP operation					
13	I use e-management tools such as information management systems, communication systems in the operation of QAP					
14	There is an urgent need to develop a strategy to use e-management applications for managing QAP					
15	The university management structure is suitable for using e-management applications in the operation of QAP					
16	The University provides advanced electronic environment that stimulates the use of e-management applications for QAP					
17	Managing QAP electronically requires expensive equipment and systems					
18	The university holds appropriate training programs to train faculty members for using e-management applications in the operation of QAP					
19	The use of e-management applications in the operation of QAP requires encouragement both financially and morally					

Section (4): Could you, please answer the following questions (Optional):

1. **Are there any challenges that limit your engagement in the operation of Quality Assurance Processes?**
   ……
   ……
2. **From your perspective, how might those challenges be overcome?**
   ……
   ……
3. **Please comment on any aspect of this research?**
   ……
   ……

Thank you very much for cooperation

Appendix 6B: The structure of the questionnaire (Arabic)

صاحب السعادة عضو هيئة التدريس المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،،

كجزء من دراستي للدكتوراه في جامعة جلاسجو، اسكتلندا، المملكة المتحدة، أقوم بإجراء دراسة حول عملية ضمان الجودة في الجامعات السعودية، وتمثل الجامعة محور اهتمام هذه الدراسة. الهدف الرئيس من هذه الدراسة هو وضع إطار شامل لتعزيز عمليات ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية مع إيلاء العناية إلى توجهات الإدارة التعليمية ووجهات نظر أصحاب المصلحة، والدور المتوقع للإدارة الإلكترونية في تحسين عمليات ضمان الجودة.

إن مشاركتكم في هذا الاستبيان لها أهمية بالغة وهي محل تقدير كبير، حيث تساعد الباحث على تحقيق أهداف الدراسة.

وأود أن أغتنم هذه الفرصة لأؤكد لكم أنه سيتم التعامل مع البيانات بمنتهى السرية وسوف تستخدم فقط لأغراض هذه الدراسة.

أرجو ملاحظة التالي:

- توجد معلومات مرفقة مع الاستبيان عن البحث يمكنك الاطلاع عليها.
- استكمالك للاستبيان هي موافقة منك على المشاركة.
- الرجاء عدم كتابة الاسم.
- ضع الاستبيان مشكورا بعد ملأه في الظرف المرفق، وتفضل بتسليمه لمكتب سكرتير العميد أو مكتب الصادر والوارد.
- إذا كنت قد شاركت في الاستبيان الإلكتروني، فأنت لا تحتاج لملء هذا الاستبيان.

شاكرا لكم تعاونكم مسبقا.

وتقبلوا تحياتي وتقديري،،،

الباحث/ مصعب سعود الحليبي

القسم الأول/ المعلومات الشخصية:

فضلاً، ضع علامة (✓) للاختيار المناسب (اختر واحدا فقط)

1. الجنسية:		2. الجنس:	
1. سعودي	☐	1. ذكر	☐
2. غير سعودي	☐	2. أنثى	☐
3. العمل الحالي: دورك الرئيسي الحالي في الجامعة		4. الخبرة في مجال ضمان الجودة:	
1. عضو هيئة تدريس	☐	1. لا توجد خبرة سابقة	☐
2. في منصب إداري	☐	2. توجد خبرة	☐
3. عضو في إحدى لجان الجودة، مكتب الجودة أو عمادة ضمان الجودة	☐		

القسم الثاني/ المشاركة في عمليات ضمان الجودة:

فضلاً، ضع علامة (✓) للاختيار الذي تراه مناسبا

الرقم	العبارات	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق بشدة
1	لدي فهم واضح عن مفهوم ضمان الجودة، ومعاييرها، وعملياتها					
2	أعرف المطلوب مني لأكون مشاركا نشطا في عمليات ضمان الجودة					
3	أسعى لتحقيق معايير ضمان الجودة في أداء عملي اليومي					
4	أشجع وأحفز فريق العمل على المشاركة في عمليات ضمان الجودة					
5	أؤيد سياسات الجامعة والجهود المبذولة لتحقيق معايير					

	الجودة					
6	أشارك في الاستطلاعات التي تقوم بها الجامعة حول قضايا ضمان الجودة					
7	أشارك في المقابلات وورش العمل التي تنفذ في الجامعة لمناقشة جودة السياسات والأنظمة والإجراءات					
8	أشارك في عمليات تحسين وتطوير الجامعة و/أو القسم الذي أعمل به					
9	آخذ بزمام المبادرة لتحسين الأداء المؤسسي و/أو البرامج الأكاديمية					
10	أشارك في التخطيط لعملية ضمان الجودة وأنشطتها داخل الجامعة					
11	أشارك في عملية التقييم الذاتي للنظر في الأداء المؤسسي					
12	أشجع الطلاب على المشاركة في عملية تقييم البرامج الأكاديمية					
13	مستعد للمشاركة في اللجان والوحدات الناشطة في عمليات ضمان الجودة					
14	أشارك في عملية جمع الأدلة لمعايير ضمان الجودة، وإعداد التقارير، و رسم خطط التحسين					
15	تدعم سياسات وقرارات إدارة الجامعة مشاركة الأكاديميين في عمليات ضمان الجودة					
16	تشجع الجامعة منسوبيها على المشاركة في عمليات ضمان الجودة ماديا ومعنويا بشكل كاف					
17	الفرص متاحة للمشاركة في صنع القرارات المتعلقة بعملية ضمان الجودة					
18	توجد برامج تدريبية كافية لتطوير المهارات اللازمة لممارسة عمليات ضمان الجودة					

19	تعقد البرامج التدريبية وورش العمل في أوقات مناسبة					
20	أنظر إلى عملية ضمان الجودة كجزء من واجبي المهني					
21	تتطلب المشاركة في عمليات ضمان الجودة تعلم مهارات صعبة، واكتساب معارف كثيرة					
22	تؤدي عمليات ضمان الجودة إلى زيادة ساعات العمل دون حوافز مالية كافية					
23	يوجد تداخل بين أدوار ومسؤوليات الموظفين العاملين في لجان ووحدات ضمان الجودة					
24	معايير ضمان الجودة مناسبة لثقافة الجامعة					

القسم الثالث/ الإدارة الإلكترونية وضمان الجودة:

فضلاً، ضع علامة (✓) للاختيار الذي تراه مناسبا

الرقم	العبارات	وافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق بشدة
1	تعزز الإدارة الإلكترونية عمليات الإشراف والمتابعة ومراجعة الأداء الفردي والتنظيمي بدقة وموضوعية					
2	تسهل الإدارة الإلكترونية الوصول إلى آراء المستفيدين (التغذية الراجعة) داخل وخارج الجامعة					
3	تقلل الإدارة الإلكترونية من البيروقراطية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة وتساهم في إعادة هيكلتها لتصبح أكثر فعالية					
4	تعزز الإدارة الإلكترونية مبادئ الجودة مثل الموضوعية والشفافية والمساءلة					
5	توفر الإدارة الإلكترونية معلومات كافية لصناع القرار عن أداء لجان ضمان الجودة ووحداتها، إنجازاتها, ونقاط قوتها وضعفها.					

6	تحسن وتسرع الإدارة الإلكترونية عملية صنع القرارات في المستويات الإدارية ذات العلاقة بعملية ضمان الجودة					
7	تسهل الإدارة الإلكترونية عملية إدارة المعلومات وتحافظ على سريتها					
8	توفر الإدارة الإلكترونية للعاملين في عمليات ضمان الجودة العمل من أي مكان وفي أي زمان					
9	تساعد الإدارة الإلكترونية على تسريع تحقيق معايير ضمان الجودة، والمحافظة عليها					
10	تعزز الإدارة الإلكترونية التنسيق والتعاون بين لجان ووحدات الجودة بربطها بنظام اتصال إلكتروني متكامل					
11	تساعد الإدارة الإلكترونية على الاستخدام الأمثل للموارد البشرية والمالية في عمليات ضمان الجودة					
12	تدعم الإدارة الإلكترونية استمرارية وكفاءة إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة					
13	أستخدم أدوات الإدارة الإلكترونية مثل أنظمة إدارة المعلومات، ونظم الاتصالات في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة					
14	هناك حاجة ملحة لتطوير استراتيجية لاستخدام تطبيقات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة					
15	الهيكل التنظيمي للجامعة مناسب لاستخدام تطبيقات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة					
16	توفر الجامعة بيئة إلكترونية متطورة تشجع على استخدام تطبيقات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة					
17	تتطلب إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة إلكترونيا تجهيزات وأنظمة باهظة الثمن					

18	تعقد في الجامعة برامج تدريبية مناسبة لتدريب أعضاء هيئة التدريس على استخدام تطبيقات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة					
19	يتطلب استخدام تطبيقات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة تشجيعا ماديا ومعنويا					

القسم الرابع/ آمل التكرم بالإجابة على الأسئلة التالية إن أمكن:

1. هل هناك أية تحديات تقيد مشاركتكم في عمليات ضمان الجودة وممارساتها؟

.....

.....

2. كيف يمكن تجاوز تلك التحديات من وجهة نظركم؟

.....

.....

3. أرجو التعليق على أي من القضايا المرتبطة بهذه الدراسة:

.....

.....

شكرا جزيلا لاستجابتكم وتعاونكم.

Appendix 7A: Plain language statement- Questionnaire (English)

University of Glasgow | School of Education

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

My name is Mossab Alholiby. I am a student at the University of Glasgow. As part of my doctoral studies I am carrying out a research project. The title of the project is:

Developing a Framework to Enhance the Operation of Quality Assurance Processes in Saudi Arabia Higher Education: Educational Management and E-management Perspectives

This research is supervised by Dr Robert Doherty at the University of Glasgow (email: Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk telephone: 01413303091) and Prof Victor Lally of the University of Glasgow (email: victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk, telephone: 0141 3303424).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2. Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in this research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please feel free to ask questions about anything you are unclear about or if you would like to have more information. Please take your time to consider whether you wish to take part.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The main purpose of the study is to enhance the operation of quality assurance processes in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions by: exploring stakeholders' engagement in the operation of QA processes, Identifying the key issues confronting stakeholders in the development of QA processes and exploring stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward using e- management tools in the operation of QA processes. In addition, it seeks to assist the case study University to move towards the development of high quality processes and management in all its departments. This research will seek to provide a developmental framework for academic leaders in adopting e-management and quality assurance systems in their management of change towards national standards for higher education quality. To date, there has been virtually no research in this area undertaken in Saudi Arabia.

4. Why have I been chosen?

The University in Saudi Arabia is being used as a focus for this study. Your professional role in the University organisation means that your views, understanding and professional experiences can inform this research and help to give an understanding of the development of quality assurance and e-management and their current operation in the University. Other colleagues with similar roles in the University are being asked to take part in the study.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you to decide whether or not to you wish to take part. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time and do not need to provide a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

In the event that you agree to take part in the study, you will participate by completing the questionnaire provided. It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your responses will be kept confidential. You will responses to the questionnaire will be completely anonymous.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

If requested, you can receive a copy of the results of this study. You may also receive a copy of the thesis arising from the study if you so request.

9. Who has reviewed the study?

This study will be reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow.

10. Contact for Further Information

For further information, please contact the researcher Mossab Alholiby email: m.alholiby.1@research.gla.ac.uk mobile phones: 00966503903031/00447580981428. The supervisors: Dr Robert Doherty at The University Glasgow; contact details: email: Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk telephone: 01413303091 and Prof Victor Lally at The University Glasgow; contact details: email: victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk, telephone: 0141 3303424. In addition, if you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project you can contact the School of Education Ethics Officer by contacting Dr Margaret McCulloch at Margaret.McCulloch@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 7B: Plain language statement - Questionnaire (Arabic)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

بيان توضيحي

1. عنوان الدراسة وتفاصيلها:

اسمي مصعب الحليبي. طالب دكتوراه في جامعة جلاسجو في سكوتلاند بالمملكة المتحدة وأقوم بمشروع بحثي بعنوان :

تعزيز عملية ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية:

إطار عمل مقترح من وجهة نظر الإدارة التربوية والإلكترونية

يشرف على البحث:

د. روبرت دوهرتي -جامعة جلاسجو(الإيميل:Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:01413303091)

وأ.د فيكتور لالي – جامعة جلاسجو (الإيميل:victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:3303424 0141).

شكرا لما ستبذله من وقت لقراءة التالي:

2. الدعوة للمشاركة:

تسعدني دعوتك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، وقبل أن تقرر ما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة أم لا، إنه من المهم أن تعرف سبب تنفيذ الدراسة وعلى ماذا ستشمل الدراسة. أرجو أن تأخذ بعض الوقت لقراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية ويمكنك أن تسألني وتناقشني فيها إذا رغبت في ذلك. أرجو أن تشعر بالحرية بالسؤال عن أي شيء قد يكون غير واضح لديك، أو إذا كنت ترغب في مزيد من المعلومات. أرجو أن تأخذ وقتا كافيا للنظر فيما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة أم لا.

3. ما هو الهدف من الدراسة؟

الغرض الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو تعزيز إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية عن طريق استكشاف مدى المشاركة في تسيير عمليات ضمان الجودة، تحديد القضايا الرئيسية التي تواجه أصحاب المصلحة في تطوير عمليات ضمان الجودة واستكشاف تصورات ومواقف أصحاب المصلحة المعنيين تجاه استخدام أدوات الإدارة الإلكترونية في إدارة عمليات ضمان الجودة. إلى جانب ذلك، فإنه يسعى إلى مساعدة الجامعة محور الدراسة للمضي قدما نحو مستوى عال من الجودة في عمليات ضمان الجودة في كل قطاعاتها. وسوف تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى توفير إطار تطويري مقترح للقيادات الأكاديمية لاعتماد أنظمة الإدارة الإلكترونية وضمان الجودة في إدارة التغيير لتحقيق معايير الوطنية لجودة التعليم العالي. حتى الآن، لا يوجد حاليا أي دراسة في هذا المجال تحديدا أجريت في المملكة العربية السعودية.

4. لماذا تم اختياري؟

تم اختيار الجامعة في المملكة العربية السعودية لتكون محور هذه الدراسة ولتكون حالة واقعية لدراستها. كما تم اختياركم لدوركم المهني وخبرتكم في الجامعة وللتعرف على وجهة نظركم التي سوف تسهم في إثراء هذه الدراسة، وإعطاء فهم دقيق لتطوير وتطبيق الإدارة الإلكترونية وضمان الجودة في الجامعة. الزملاء الآخرون الذين لديهم أدوار مشابهة ولهم علاقة بموضوع الدراسة ستتم دعوتهم للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة أيضا.

5. هل يجب أن أشارك؟

لك مطلق الحرية في المشاركة في الدراسة أو عدم المشاركة أيضاً، إذا قررت المشاركة من حقك الانسحاب في أي وقت دون الحاجة إلى تقديم سبب. كما يمكنك طلب الانسحاب أو إعادة المعلومات التي سبق أن قدمتها.

6. ماذا سيحدث إذا قبلت المشاركة في الدراسة؟

في حالة موافقتك على المشاركة في الدراسة، ستشارك بملأ الاستبيان المقدم إليك. ومن المتوقع ألا يستغرق الاستبيان أكثر من 20 دقيقة.

7. هل ستكون مشاركتي محفوظة بشكل سري؟

سيتم الاحتفاظ بمشاركتكم بسرية كاملة، كما أنه لا توجد أي معلومات في الاستبانة تدل على شخصكم الكريم ولذا فإن شخصيتكم في الدراسة ستكون مجهولة تماما.

8. ماذا سيحدث لنتائج الدراسة؟

يمكنك الحصول على نسخة من النتائج أو نسخة من الدراسة إذا طلبت ذلك.

9. من قام وسيقوم بمراجعة الدراسة؟

هذه الدراسة ستتم مراجعتها من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث في كلية العلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة جلاسجو-المملكة المتحدة.

10. للتواصل لمزيد من المعلومات:

لمزيد من المعلومات أرجو الاتصال بالباحث: مصعب الحليبي (الإيميل: m.alholiby.1@research.gla.ac.uk 00966503903031/00447580981428) المشرفون على الدراسة: د. روبرت دوهرتي - جامعة جلاسجو(الإيميل: Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:01413303091) وأ.د فيكتور لالي – جامعة جلاسجو (الإيميل: victor.lally@Glasgow.ac.uk الهاتف:3303424 0141).

إذا كان هناك ما يقلقك بشأن هذه الدراسة يمكنك الاتصال بلجنة أخلاقيات البحوث كلية العلوم الاجتماعية برئاسة الدكتور مارغريت مكولوتش الإيميل Margaret.McCulloch@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 8: Research ethics approval (Scoping Study)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application Outcome ☐

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application Outcome ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400120074

Application Type New ☒ Resubmission ☐

Applicant's Name Mossab Alholiby

Project Title Operationalizing Saudi Arabia's Quality Assurance Standards in Higher Education: E-Administration and Education Management Perspectives

Date application reviewed *(d.m.yr)* 02/07/13

Application Outcome **Approved**

Start Date of Approval *(d.m.yr)* 17-07-2013

(blank of if not approved)

End Date of Approval *(d.m.yr)* 30-10-2016

If the applicant has been given approval this means they can proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations **(where application is Not Approved)**

Please note the comments below and provide further information where requested. All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded. You must include a covering letter in a separate document (uploaded as the **Resubmission Document** online) to explain the changes you have made to the application.

Major

Minor

Comments ***(other than specific recommendations)***

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Terri Hume, Ethics Administrator.

End of Notification.

Appendix 9: Research ethics approval (Main Study)

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐ ***Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application*** ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400140006

Applicant's Name Mossab Alholiby

Project Title Developing a Framework to Enhance the Operation of Quality Assurance Processes in Saudi Arabia¿s Higher Education: Educational Management and E-management Perspectives

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Application Status **Approved**

Start Date of Approval *(d.m.yr)* 27-09-2014

(blank if Changes Required/ Rejected)

End Date of Approval of Research Project *(d.m.yr)* 30-10-2016

Only if the applicant has been given **approval** can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Recommendations **(where Changes are Required)**

- ***Where changes are required all applicants must respond*** in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and upload this as the **Resubmission Document** online to explain the changes you have made to the application. All resubmitted application documents should then be uploaded.
- *(**If application is Rejected** a full new application must be submitted via the online system. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document uploaded as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.*

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MAJOR

MINOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MINOR

REVIEWER COMMENTS COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE TO REVIEWER

(OTHER THAN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS)

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Terri Hume, Ethics Administrator. End of Notification.